

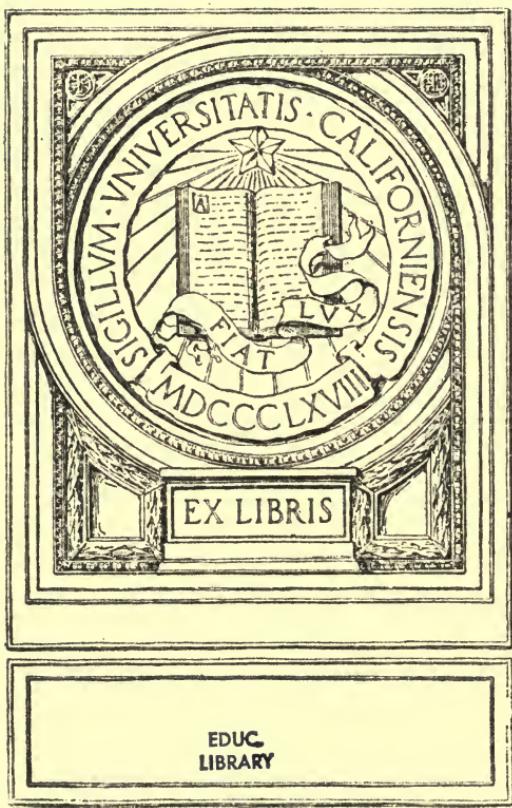
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THE FREE SCHOOL IDEA IN VIRGINIA BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

A PHASE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
EVOLUTION

BY

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THE VICTORY
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FOREWORD

THIS study is an attempt to assemble and interpret new documentary evidence upon the evolution of the common free school in Virginia. A preliminary survey of the field, "Elementary Education in Virginia during the Early Nineteenth Century," was submitted to a seminar in the History of American Education at Teachers College in 1911. That investigation represented an effort to organize the facts of local history as a basis for a course in the History of Modern Education for Virginia normal schools, training classes, and study circles of teachers in service.

The investigation has been continued with the belief that the story of the state's educational transition from colony to commonwealth has never been told; that fragmentary bits of evidence have, in the main, suffered misinterpretation from sentimental and ill-informed critic alike. Virginia should not be condemned because it was not like the industrial states; nor should its apologists cite the glory of the University and gloss over the very significant struggle for popular education that characterized the Old Dominion during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Virginia before the War did not succeed in creating a centralized state system, supported by compulsory public taxation, but it would be equally wrong to say that it was a laggard among the states. One should approach this period with the assumption that ante-bellum Virginia evolved the foundations, at least, of a common free school system and moved, perhaps, as rapidly to a democratization of its institutions as did any of the agricultural sections of the American states.

My acknowledgment is due Professor Paul Monroe for his investigations and for those standards of scholarship which have been conscious goals in the progress of this work. To Professor William H. Kilpatrick, I am especially indebted for three readings of the manuscript, many conferences, and numerous fruitful suggestions of new lines of research. To

Dr. I. L. Kandel, I am also grateful for a careful, critical reading of the manuscript. To Miss Julia C. Patton, of the Department of English, Teachers College, I am under obligation for assistance in the final revision for the press. The greatest debt, however, is to my wife, without whose encouragement and constant help this study would have been impossible.

W. A. M.

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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THE FREE SCHOOL IDEA IN VIRGINIA
BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE COLONIAL SOCIAL SYSTEM AND EARLY FREE SCHOOL FOUNDATIONS

WHEN Virginia's early Royal Governor, Sir William Berkeley, anxious to secure himself with the restored Stuarts,¹ reported in 1671 to the Lord Commissioners of Trade and Plantations on conditions in the colony, "Thank God, there are no Free Schools," he gave rise to a misconception that has died only with the present generation. As a matter of fact, there had been English "free" school foundations in the colony almost from its inception. The Governor himself sanctioned private free school bequests when he approved the Act of 1642, which incorporated the Benjamin Syms's School "according to the godly intent of the said testator and for the encouragement of others in like pious performances."²

The implications of Berkeley's historic exclamation are not

¹ Cf. Brown, Alexander, English Politics in Early Virginia History, 8, 11, 12, *et seq.*: "The first English colony [Virginia] was not founded by a king nor by an agent of a king nor on the monarchial principles of government advocated by a king." The charters of 1609 and 1612 were fathered by Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Edwin Sandys, who were at the same time leaders of the liberal party or "advocates of English rights" against "the secret court Spanish party" of James I. Sandys was also a prime factor in the affairs of the Virginia Company of London. Mr. Brown quotes one Captain John Bargraves, a contemporary of Sir Edwin Sandys, as saying, "Sandys' . . . purpose was to erect a free popular state in Virginia in which the inhabitants should have no government put upon them but by their own consent." In 1624, however, this movement was interrupted by the establishment of "His Majesties' most princely government . . . thirteen councilors in Virginia and as many in England, all nominated by His Majesty." One of Berkeley's early acts, 1642, was a "Declaration against the company" in answer to a petition of the Patriot or Liberal party in Virginia (*vide* Hening, I, 231). During the period of the Commonwealth, patriot governors ruled the colony under the authority of the House of Burgesses, which was a representative body. In 1660, on Berkeley's return to power, a new House loyal to Charles II was returned and every effort was again made to stem the tide of popular government, which finally found expression in the revolution of 1776. Throughout Berkeley's administration every means was used to crush sedition, to prevent "misgovernment," as the governor artfully phrased self-government.

² Hening, Statutes, I: Act XVIII, March 1642-3, confirms Benjamin Syms's will giving lands for a free school in Elizabeth City County, and encourages all "others in like pious performances."

clear, as it confuses the issue of popular schools with that of liberal education. Since the primary object of the Syms school was to equip the poor with little more than the three r's, it has been advanced that Berkeley's protest was against the liberal or "free" courses of study of the great English Public Schools, Eton and Harrow, etc., not against the teaching of the mechanics of learning to tradesmen who were not intellectually "free" men at all.³ William and Mary, 1693, was the first free school — *libera schola* — in this sense in the colony. Yet Berkeley is said to have headed a subscription in 1662, on his return to the governorship, for the establishment of such "a free school and college." But however this ambiguous term "free" is to be understood, there is no doubt as to Berkeley's main position. He feared the power of radical ideas expressed through free schools, free press and free pulpits. He remembered too well the dangerous activities of the "Patriot" party in the reign of James I and its sedition against "the best government." Only "court" histories received the royal imprimatur and one licensed newspaper and printing press was deemed sufficient for the colony. The whole spirit of his report is an arraignment of those agencies for self-government and for the diffusion of knowledge which the colony was even at that time nourishing. His philippic, indeed, indicates a substantial class in the colony who, through education, "had brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world." It would seem to bear witness to the fact that the very idea he would suppress was dangerously active in Virginia, that royal interests had much to fear in a group of liberals intent on civil freedom.

In a less widely quoted sentence in his answer to the Commissioners' question, "What course is taken about instructing the people in the Christian religion?" Governor Berkeley did, however, state the future educational policy of Virginia when he said, "The same course that is taken in England out of town, every man according to his ability instructing his children,"⁴ i.e., every man teaching his own children and seeing to it that the indigent were taught. Virginia was destined to become a colony of large landholders and dependents, and

³ Cf. *William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine*, VI, 78.

⁴ Hening, *op. cit.*, 1671, II, 517.

to find in the traditions, institutions, and social distinctions "of England out of town" an expression of its growing land and anti-commercial interests.

It is not to be understood, however, that Virginia was a replica of English civilization in all its aspects. As a stage of social evolution there is reason to believe that with slavery and the new distinction between master and servant which that institution made, Virginia was, in its self-sustaining isolated "baronages," a replica of a much earlier state of English society than that of the Restoration with its great commons and industrial classes. The colony's social-economic system sprang from the policy implied in the English attorney-general Seymour's testy reply to Commissary Blair's plea in 1692 for a college for the education of native ministers, that the souls of the Indians and settlers might be saved: "Damn your souls, make tobacco!" The mother country encouraged the growth of large plantations and actively hindered navigation and every effort to establish towns and encourage industry.⁵ England monopolized the carrying trade of the world so far as she could control it, and that she did control it for a time the War of the American Revolution attests. As Virginia developed, land, therefore, became even more the measure of wealth and opportunity than in Old England. Fortunately for the future of democracy, Virginia was vast in area, land was cheap, and yielded abundantly to extensive cultivation, while out beyond the headwaters of the rivers and across the mountains lay the great open West.

Apparently the English-born aristocrat was the exceptional immigrant to the colony. Although it is said that more than five hundred Virginia families of the late eighteenth century traced their origin to distinguished English families, the Virginia planter-aristocrat evolved, in the most part, from the successful English middle class.⁶ After the first enthusiasm of the gentlemen adventurers was damped by the reverses at Jamestown, the permanent settlers of the colony,

⁵ Hening, *op. cit.*, II, 471; III, Act Establishing Towns, 1705, repealed 1710; Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia*, p. 44; Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I. Cf. Jefferson's opposition to commercialism in Virginia, Beard, Charles A., *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*, 422-5.

⁶ *Vide* Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia*, 28, 61.

financed in the main by the Virginia Company of London, were drawn more and more largely from two main sources: (1) the great independent merchant class of the English trading population who sought civil freedom and business advantage in the New World and found it in land; and (2) the more nondescript but not wholly unsubstantial indentured servant class who, in spite of the period of servitude to the planter demanded as the price of passage, saw for themselves in the bonus of fifty acres of land⁷ a new economic status in life.

The idea, then, of the wholesale transplanting of English aristocracy to the Old Dominion is, it would seem, largely a romance based on the distinctive aristocracy Virginia evolved of itself as a result of the natural operation of economic law. A bourgeois class passed quickly into a landed class. A part of England's middle class, with a few representatives of the English gentry, gained advantage first through land, later through negro slavery, and finally through shutting off competition and retarding the rise of a rival commercial class. Virginia may truly be said to have evolved its aristocracy of land and its class of dependent poor.

This new aristocracy fortified itself by intermarriage as did the aristocracy of the Old World. A spirit of family pride, the desire to found a family and maintain and perpetuate property, laid the foundations of Virginia's social and political system. Fathers wished to bequeath not only their property but even political office to their sons. Family became a basis of class, and family connection, a basis for that proprietary spirit with which Virginians have always regarded their state and their kin. The present practice of tracing one's kin to remote degrees is reminiscent of this early caste spirit.

The products from Virginia opened a new and fertile field to English commercialism; the African negro slave offered a new class for exploitation. With the introduction of slavery as a substitute for service under the old wage or apprenticeship system, Virginia, of course, did not reflect seventeenth-century English life. Before the negro came in profitable numbers to the colony, however, white labor was imported from Old England by the London Company. The indentured servant, drawn from all classes of English society, came

⁷ Beverley, Robert, *History of Virginia*, 1722, 238.

in great numbers as tobacco became commercially important and demanded extensive farming. As these servants finished their indenture they were free, if financially able, to buy land or to go into voluntary service. When the negro was introduced the white servant was not able to compete with him. The negro was permanent, cheaper, more tractable, better able to withstand the exigencies of climate and to do the work required in the fields. As the number of negroes increased there could be no basis of competition or of labor equality. The key to success and to self-respect lay in the ownership of land or in migration to the West. In this great region groups of colonists such as the Germans of the lower Shenandoah Valley, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the Southside and Southwest, and the Huguenots of Piedmont had established themselves. Many of those in the eastern counties who did not acquire land pushed into Piedmont or passed over the mountains into Transylvania and Trans-Alleghany.

A type of selection operated to sift the socially fit from the naturally "poor." The well-to-do, freed from labor and detail by slave-service and disciplined by *noblesse oblige*, became a class well trained in leadership. The indolent and less competent sank into a slavery of poverty and social inefficiency and became, in fact, a nucleus of the traditional "poor white"⁸ of Old Virginia. The gradual evolution of poor laws, or rather modifications of the English Statute of Artificers, the Statute for the Relief of the Poor, 1562, and the Statute of 1601, indicates a growing class of the "poor" that looked to the colony, and, in the early days of the commonwealth, to the state, for vocational training, for the means of reading and writing, and, at times, for maintenance in adult years. The odious distinction between the "rich" and the "poor" and the paternal attitude of the rich toward the dependent lower class, so characteristic of the English social system, became deeply rooted in the customary thinking of both classes and ran well into the nineteenth century. New demands would come with the development of a new social class, an independent, self-conscious middle class of free land-owning farmers, too small even now in some of the South-

⁸ *Vide* Washington, Henry A., Social System of Virginia, in *Southern Literary Messenger*, 1848, 70; also Wertenbaker, *op. cit.*, 146.

ern states. Virginia's part in the American Revolution, it will be remembered, was largely fomented among the "back-woods" of Piedmont and "New" Virginia, where the small, independent farmer had already found a place. Patrick Henry was representative of this democracy and Thomas Jefferson, in his crusade to hasten the day of a new political era, found his inspiration in this class.

Education in colonial Virginia reflected the social philosophy and safeguarded the economic-social interests upon which the plantation system was built. The Established Church of England and the Colonial Assembly administered the educational and civil affairs of the colony. Those who could afford it retained tutors in their families. This was the most approved practice among the well-to-do down to the time of the Revolution. Under the patronage of the Church certain parishes supported Latin grammar schools. It cannot be said, however, that even the majority of the parishes had such schools, as the tutorial system and the great distances between plantations combined to make this institution unnecessary and impracticable. Sporadic private English neighborhood schools later appeared and became known in the country districts as the "Old Field" Schools. The "poor" — children of indigent parents, orphans of all classes left without property — were given a practical education appropriate to their social station through apprenticeship to a master of one of the trades. The state gave little concern to "literary" education except to exact a guarantee from communities that all teachers should be sound in the doctrines of the Church and safe subjects of the Crown.⁹ Except for certain statutes governing the College of William and Mary, practically all legislation on public education was in approval of free school foundations or in the regulation of apprenticeship.¹⁰ In the four years 1679-83, Surrey County Court alone bound out more than fifty apprentices under indentures providing for their education.¹¹ There were, when Berkeley made his misleading statement about Virginia "free" schools, at least seven free or

⁹ *Vide* p. 106.

¹⁰ *Vide* Knight, E. W., *Sewanee Review*, January, 1916; Hening, *Statutes*, I, 261, 336-7; II, 298; III, 375; IV, 212, 482; V, 449 ff.; VI, 32, 475; VIII, 376.

¹¹ Bruce, Philip, *Institutional History of Virginia*, I, 310; also *Economic History of Virginia*, I, chaps. IX, X. An excellent example of the administration

charity school foundations for the poor established to supplement the educational provisions of the apprenticeship acts.¹²

The practice of apprenticing children for specific training extended to the wealthy. No less a Virginian than Colonel John Carter orders in his will of January 3, 1669, that his son Robert (King Carter) in his minority be

"well educated for the use of his estate, and he is to have a man or youth servant bought for him that hath been brought up in the Latin school and that he (the servant) shall constantly tend upon him, not only to teach him his books, either in English or Latin, according to his capacity (for my will is that he shall learn both Latin and English, and to write), but also to preserve him from harm and from doing evil. My executors to allow my wife for her sons education 10 pounds per annum and *in case my wife put her son out apprentice his portion is to be paid.*"¹³

In the case of the "poor," the services of a youth were given for several years to a master workman, who in return was obligated to teach him his trade, the three r's, and to make him God-fearing and law-abiding; to furnish him, in short, with three sets of habits valuable to a poor man. Thus, as Hugh Jones said in 1724, the colony was "never tormented with vagrants. When there is a numerous family of poor children the vestry takes care to bind them out apprentices till they are able to maintain themselves with labor."¹⁴

Princess Anne County records reveal this means of educating its poor children. On March 2, 1712, Samuel Shepherd petitioned the court for

"Liberty to Erect a Schoole on Ye Courthouse for common Benefit which upon consideracion of ye advantage y't may arrive from ye same it is ordered accordingly, provided he build the same as ffar as he cann from ye Church and Courthouse. . . . it is ye Judgm't of this court y't he have Liberty to keep School in ye Court House till a school house be built."¹⁵

of this system is to be found in the Princess Anne Co. Records, May 1, 1717, reprinted in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, II, 345: "Ordered that ye Sheriff Sumon George Smyth to the next Court to answere the Complaint of his apprentice Rich'd Williams & Shew ye court Reasons why he does not Teach him to read as by indenture he is oblig'd." At a Court held June 5, 1717: "George Smyth being Som'd to this Court to answere the complaint of his apprentice Richard Williams & upon his appearing and promising to put ye said apprentice forthwith to Schoole & to doe his true Endeavour to teach him his trade ye Court doe order ye s'd Rich'd home to live with his master ye remaining part of his time by indenture."

¹² Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia*, I, 357-61.

¹³ Extract, will, Col. John Carter, Lancaster Court House, recorded Jan. 9 1722, cited in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, II, 229.

¹⁴ Jones, Hugh, *The Present State of Virginia*, 309.

¹⁵ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, III, 193, communicated by Edward W. James.

In 1716 the same court ordered:

“George Shurly petitioning for Liberty and Lycence for his Servant Peter Taylor to keep Schoole in the Court house jury roome & ye Court thinking ye same to be a reasonable and usual practice doe order that he have Liberty as aforesaid, he taking due care to keep ye benches &c. in such good order as they are at present in.”¹⁶

It is common knowledge that despite Berkeley's remark, Virginia, as an infant colony, saw the need of free, if not common schools. The short-lived school at Charles City, destroyed in 1622, was a free school. From the time of the bequest of Benjamin Syms, 1634, it was a common practice among Virginians, as it was among pious English gentlemen everywhere, to remember the education of the poor in their wills. Robert Beverley, in 1703, leads one to believe that these legacies were very numerous and were in many cases “a handsome maintenance to a master.” Mr. Bruce, in his recent social studies of the colony, lists the more important of these foundations.¹⁷

In addition to those cited by Mr. Bruce, the provisions of several other wills may be given here as typical of the spirit of the colony. John Farneffold, an Anglican minister of Fairfield parish in Northumberland County in 1702, left

“one hundred acres . . . for the maintenance of a free school to be called Winchester schoole for fower o' five poore children belonging to ye parish & to be taught gratis & have their dyett and lodging and washing, & when they can read the Bible & write a legible hand to dismiss them & take in more . . . for further encouragement of a school master I give dyett, lodging and washing, 500 pounds of tobacco & a horse, Bridle and Saddle to ride on during his stay. . . . Item what school books I have in my study I leave for ye benefit of ye schoole.”¹⁸

In the will of Daniel Hornby, a merchant tailor of Richmond County, “20 pounds a year for five years is left to support a Latin master who should teach ten children gratis as a condition of the bequest.”¹⁹ Humphrey Hill of King and Queen County, St. Stephen's Parish, in 1775 left £500, the interest on which was “to be annually paid to such school-

¹⁶ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, III, 193, communicated by Edward W. James.

¹⁷ Bruce, *op. cit.*, I, 350-60: Syms', 1636; Capt. Moon's, 1655; King's, 1669; Eaton's, 1680; Ed. Moseley's, 1721; Richard Russell's, 1721; Hugh Lee's, 1652; William Gordon's, 1685; *et al.*

¹⁸ *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, XVII, 245; also VI, 73.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XVII, 246.

master as shall teach one or more children whose parents are unable to pay for the instruction.”²⁰ The present Marriot High School of St. Stephen’s Parish, King and Queen County, was built several years ago with the residue of the bequest made about this time by the widow of Captain Marriot of Bewdley. The original bequest was one thousand acres of land, near St. Stephen’s Church, to be divided into ten farms, the rents to be devoted to the education of poor children.²¹

One of Nansemond County’s early free school funds came from the will of John Yeates, Sept. 18, 1731, who gave the rent of his land and the hire of his slaves to help keep his church in repair and pay the yearly wages of a schoolmaster. In other items of the will, his library and a sum of £10 for other books were given the free schools he had made possible.²² William Monroe, 1767, of Orange, left an estate of £20,000,²³ and the Rev. Samuel Sanford, 1710,²⁴ of Accomac, a fund, each for the encouragement of education in his respective county. In running through old wills one frequently finds provision for free schools as an alternative in case the beneficiary die without issue or before the will is probated. These old wills are mute evidences of the early colonial free school idea.

Thus the English *laissez-faire* policy upon which the colony’s social-economic system was built extended to its educational system. The socially competent looked after their own affairs and later fought any change in principle of government which forced them to give up this privilege of initiative. Vagrancy and the burden of pauperism were carefully guarded against. The socially incompetent, the poor, were educated as a protection to established society, taught “to maintain themselves with labor.”

In the transition from colony to commonwealth, the free, common school must be slowly and painfully evolved. As long as the ideal of worth was the land-bond, two classes—the Rich and the Poor—were inevitable. The free school for all classes could not come until the state assumed the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

²¹ From a personal letter from Dr. Bernard Walker, born about 1825 in St. Stephen’s Parish, and familiar with the operation of this fund and its intent.

²² Virginia School Report, 1885, Part Third, 230, full text of the original will and the incorporation by the state, 1803, are reprinted here.

²³ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

responsibility of popular education as something more than "a pious performance" or a means of protecting society against vagrancy. The growth of commercial interests must break down the dual social system and give rise to a virile commons. Moreover, the Virginia gentleman's inherent love for English institutions must give way to the larger, newer conception implied in our modern, locally controlled, non-sectarian common free school,—the fruit of America's own experiment with the ideal of political democracy.

One should not look for radical institutional changes, for they did not come in the other American states. The history of the modern free school idea in post-revolutionary Virginia is a history of the same bitterly contested but progressive evolution as in the other states. The Virginia aristocrat was, perhaps, no less a "wild democrat" or more careful of the rights of his own class, than the large tax-payers of New York, Massachusetts, or Connecticut. All of the original states, during the early formation of the Union, were dominated more or less by the religio-aristocratic conceptions of school government and support, conceptions common to the thought and practice of Old England. Virginia fought with the other states the same battles for the democratization of her institutions, and by the time of the Civil War had evolved the foundations, at least, of free schools. And this remarkable progress was hampered at all times by the economic burdens of negro slavery, by the social system that slavery entailed, by a sectionalism which Virginia's peculiar land conformation determined from the outset, and finally by a dramatic political controversy over ways and means of realizing a democratic state, the first fruit of which was the persistence of customary thought and the defeat of a concerted school legislation which might have placed the Old Dominion first among the free school states.

The object of this study, therefore, is to trace the progress of the free school idea as it evolved out of earlier English poor law provisions, apprenticeship, and free scholarships in the private schools to that high-water mark of ante-bellum educational legislation, "The Schools for the Education of All Classes," 1850-60, in which, in a few counties at least, all the children of the rich, the bourgeoisie, and the "poor white" could be taught in common without prejudice. This was

accomplished through the spread of the Literary Fund "Poor" Schools under the Act of 1818, for the definition of the word "poor" is eventually widened to include a large percentage of the state's growing middle class, originally excluded under the charity school act. The natural course of this evolution is through the widespread faith in the voluntaristic movements for the promotion of elementary education, such as the Lancasterian, Infant, and Sunday schools, which in 1818-25 were subsidized by the state and which made possible the system of free schools before the Civil War. Notwithstanding the failure of the friends of democracy to unite on a common plan of state school government — one of the great reasons for the retardation of the free school idea — Virginia's present organization is not a gift of Reconstruction but the fulfillment of those county common school experiments which in 1859 may have been seen in every geographical subdivision of the state.

CHAPTER II

EARLY PROPOSALS AND PROVISIONS FOR FREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS. THE BILLS OF 1779 AND 1796. JEFFERSON'S IDEA OF THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

THE Virginia Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge submitted on June 8, 1779, by Jefferson, as part of the Report of the Revisors of the state code,¹ is generally accepted as the first American proposal for a modern state school system. This report was not acted upon until after the close of the war, when fifty-six of the one hundred twenty-six provisions were written into the state code. The provision for education was one of those more radical departures from colonial practice,—manumission and the education of negro slaves being another,—which was not accepted. The temper of the war legislature, however, was more after Jefferson's own heart. Evidently, while formulating the new code, he presented his ideal of education in a free state to his colleagues in the House, for in a letter to George Washington, in 1786, he said of his bill: "I never saw one received with more enthusiasm than that was in the year, 1778, by the House of Delegates, who ordered it printed; and it seems afterwards that nothing but extreme distress of our resources prevented its being carried into execution during the war."²

In his autobiography Jefferson makes himself very clear in discussing the proposals for constitutional revision. By his bills for the abolition of primogeniture, entails, and for religious liberty and public schools, "every fibre of antient and future aristocracy would be eradicated . . . and a foundation laid for a government truly republican." In particular the school bill would guarantee that democracy, i.e., the poor, would "maintain themselves and exercise with intelligence their part in self-government without the violation of a single

¹ Thomas Jefferson and George Wythe, Report of the Revisors, LXXXIX; Ford, Letters of Jefferson, II, 220.

² Henderson, Jefferson on Public Education, vi.

natural right of any individual citizen.”³ To Jefferson the danger of perpetuating a satisfied, inert peasantry was imminent. His first effort was to secure to the citizen protection against property, equality before the law, and freedom of opportunity; but the security of these rights depended upon the development of capacity for community initiative and collective self-government. His theory of common schools found a place in his larger scheme for a truly democratic state. Popular education would furnish the means of enlightenment and suggest the mechanics of collective expression which would help “lay the ax to the root of psuedo-aristocracy.” The *administration* of common schools became, therefore, quite as important a factor in the education of the Virginia people as the course of study or schools themselves.

The Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge embodied this principle. It attempted to provide a vertical system of schools starting with the primary school and, with the academy and district college, culminating in the University of William and Mary. Such a scheme would mean, of course, the eradication of the dual, parallel systems for the education of the rich and the poor characteristic of colonial policy. The cornerstone of the plan was a township or ward system of elementary schools where every free white child of both sexes might be instructed gratuitously, for three years at least, in reading, writing, arithmetic, and the elements of European and American history.

His basis of school administration was to be the community as a popular body. According to the bill, each county should proceed to elect aldermen who should divide the county into districts — or wards for the town — corresponding to the early colonial “hundred” or the New England township. In each hundred the electors should be called together to select a convenient site for a schoolhouse, to be built in common by them, to which all the children of the neighborhood should be sent. Every ten schools should be supervised by an “overseer” or superintendent whose further duty it would be “to introduce a general course of reading and instruction for his schools.” William and Mary, the head of the proposed system, was to direct the work of the academies or secondary

³ Ford, Jefferson, I, 68, 69; IX, 427.

schools. These grammar schools and academies were to be established by the joint effort of several counties; if necessary each county electing a visitor to act with William and Mary in their regulation and conduct.

It may be noted that while Thomas Jefferson accepted education as a proper object of political activity, he threw the weight of his influence against the idea that education is a function of the state as a central entity. He aimed, as a consistent political individualist, to bring his school system nearer to the people in the several communities; to put the control and discipline of the proposed system beyond the *interference* of the state, and, in the case of the peoples' primary schools, beyond the reach of Church, State, William and Mary, or any type of centralized power. He wanted no mere extension of poor law provision; his motive was not merely philanthropic. Popular education was to him a means of fulfilling his theory of government, of insuring the direction of government by the governed; an opportunity to provide an intelligent electorate; even more particularly, to provide a highly selected leadership drawn from the brains and virtue of the whole community rather than from a landed aristocracy. He wished to draw the power and leadership of the state more largely from the small farmer class and thus diffuse more generally the control of government.⁴

In a letter to J. C. Cabell, Jefferson speaks of having written Adams of his proposal for "culling from every condition of our people the natural aristocracy of talent and virtue and of preparing it by education at the public expense, for the care of public interests." This defense of democracy against an aristocracy of land is the explanation for that section of his plan providing for the "recognition and training of genius." It was to be the duty of the overseer "to select each year the most promising boy of the hundred school for two years' free tuition and board in the nearest district high school or academy." From these "Founders" twenty of the brightest and best, virtually the flowering genius of the state, were to be sent to the University of William and Mary for any courses they might select. Opportunity was to be open to all who by superior promise deserved recognition, to the end

⁴ Cf. Beard, *op. cit.*, 422.

that "the genius of the common people was not to be lost to the state."⁵

Subsequently, it seems, Jefferson decided as a tactical move to separate the provisions for primary schools and for higher schools. He proposed a second scheme in which William and Mary, as the head of his educational system, is supplanted by a new institution, without antecedents, independent of the Church, and built according to his own ideals. On January 18, 1800, he writes Joseph Priestley: "We wish to establish in the upper and healthier country a University on a plan so broad, liberal, and modern as to be worth patronizing with public support. . . . It has been the subject of consultation among the ablest characters of our state who only wait for a plan."⁶

Although Jefferson's larger plan was not incorporated into the state constitution, a later bill, the Act of 1796,⁷ calling for an "aldermanic" system of local primary schools actually passed the General Assembly. This law provided local tax or community subscription but did not mention state subsidy. It passed the Assembly but, unhappily, not till it was amended by leaving its adoption and operation to the initiative of the county courts. This amendment indicates that as the courts had enforced what "free" education the state had hitherto provided, it was deemed expedient they should continue to.⁸

A demand on the part of the people for such a system must have resulted in its establishment, but so far as available records show, no petitions were presented to the courts nor were any meetings held to consider the law. There were

⁵ Jefferson makes the statement less formally elsewhere as follows: "Twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually and be instructed at public expense so far as the grammar schools go. At the end of six years one-half of these shall go to William and Mary, etc." *Notes on Virginia*, VIII, 388. Ford, ed. III, 251. Mr. Jefferson was interested in providing an intelligent, trained leadership as well as an enlightened electorate. Genius (the supernormal child) was too important an asset to democracy to be neglected for the mass. He insisted that it is poor social economy to exhaust the resources of the state in educating the mediocre and at the expense of the exceptional and gifted child.

⁶ Ford, VII, 407.

⁷ *House Journal*, Dec. 22, 1796. An Act to Establish Public Schools—"in order that stability of government depend upon liberal, humane, enlightened, minds . . . to lay the first foundation of a system of Education which may tend to produce those desirable purposes, etc."

⁸ "On provision," says Jefferson "that the expense of these schools should be borne by the inhabitants of the county. . . . This would throw on wealth the education of the poor, and the justices, being generally of the more wealthy class, were unwilling to incur the burden." Ford, I, 67.

certain inherent reasons besides a general inertia, parsimony, and distrust by the county magistrates of so new a principle, why Virginia did not adopt this law. Here, as in all the other states, local taxation of property for the support of community schools, entirely free and open to rich and poor alike, was not a popular measure. Two centuries of apprenticeship and poor laws had not developed a strong enough demand for the new type of education to overcome the dread of cost in taxes or to enforce the acceptance of the principle that the state should compel a man to tax himself for the education of his neighbor's children. Unlike the New England states, Virginia lacked the popular local assemblies by which the people might be informed, interested, or stirred to concerted action. Massachusetts, in 1790, had a population of 378,787 in 8,327 square miles; while Virginia had only 748,308 white population scattered over 64,284 square miles of territory and organized in such a way as to necessitate, or, at least, to continue the delegation of government to the control of the few. Even had the people at large understood and accepted the ideals of Jefferson the means of stirring their representatives to accept them and cast them into law was not at hand.⁹ "The Voice of the People was not heard as in the New England township." There was no means of harmonizing the interests of a diverse population. The very conditions and atmosphere of rural life helped promote satisfaction with things as they were, a state of mind so far as public education was concerned in which, again, the majority of the original states shared.

This isolation of country life was a great stumbling block to new primary school legislation. For after all Virginia was supporting a system of tutorial and private schools, the cost of which must have far surpassed, as, indeed, Jefferson points out, the cost of common schools equally distributed to all parts of the state. With rapid changes in school population the difficulty of finding centrally located sites and of maintaining permanent buildings was a retarding factor in primary school development, but undoubtedly, the greater difficulty

⁹ This was clear to Madison, Marshall, Lee, Pendleton, Patrick Henry, and other Virginia leaders of the Revolution who foresaw that a smaller unit was essential if self-government was to become a fact.

lay in the provincial satisfaction of the masses with things as they were and in the lack of a medium through which leaders might reach and rouse them to the needs of a new era.

It is easier, it seems, to wrest equality of rights from vested privilege than to force democracy to exercise and protect those rights after they are attained. Jefferson clearly saw that so long as the people were not able to register their will intelligently, democracy would remain a sham. The success of popular government he constantly insisted hung upon two hooks: (1) public education and (2) the division of the county into wards or small political units.¹⁰ The people must be given the *means of popular action* as well as the *means of enlightenment* that must be back of all political action. He feared government in the hands of the few and wished to organize the scattered population on the basis already organized, of the militia companies, into "self-governing little *republics* within the *republic* of the county." He deplored the fact that the masses played so small a part in the government of the state and we have his solution — coöperation. "How powerfully," he writes his friend and agent, Joseph C. Cabell, in 1816, "did we feel the energy of this organization in the case of the Embargo! I felt the foundation of the government shaken under my feet by the New England township. . . . In the South and West there could be called a Court-House meeting to which only the drunken loungers could come, the distance being too great for the good and industrious to come readily."¹¹

As the colony spread from its cradle in the James River, certain geographical factors determined its history. They were to make for mutually independent social units and sooner or later to give rise to conflicting ethnic, religious, and finally diverse economic interests. The difficulty in harmonizing these interests, in attaining a working basis of "like-mindedness," obstructed measures of material internal improvement

¹⁰ Randolph, Early History of the University of Virginia as contained in the letters of Thomas Jefferson and Joseph C. Cabell, 48, 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48, 53. The county unit, however, was no accident in Virginia. It had an economic origin in the tobacco industry and in the colony's early non-commercial policy. It was the result of soil, climatic and topographical conditions, just as the New England "township" was largely the result of theocratic-social organization, soil unsuited to extensive farming, and Indian troubles. The colony early attempted political organization by Hundreds but abandoned them as its economic future became determined. *Vide* Randolph, *op. cit.*, 18, 19; also Tucker, George, Life of Jefferson, II, 352-5.

in the state till the separation of West Virginia brought a degree of homogeneity.

The Eastern Shore — comprising two large counties — is separated entirely from the body of the state by the wide waters of the Chesapeake Bay. An eastern and western division of the state was made by "The Great Barrier" — the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountain systems with the intervening Valley of the Shenandoah. As a Norfolk newspaper correspondent¹² once said, this barrier was "a backbone of from one to two hundred miles of mountains running in parallel ridges, northeast and southwest across her [Virginia's] entire limits . . . a summit level of 2000 feet . . . which no other people on the continent no more than Virginians have yet overcome." The eastern counties were subdivided by the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the York, the Piankatank, the James, and the Roanoke rivers into seven peninsulas running in parallel lines from the Blue Ridge to the Chesapeake Bay. These peninsulas formed mutually independent social groups. Along these river valleys were all the elements that would support a people, — rich lowlands, waterfalls, timber, grazing lands, and the rich mineral resources of the mountains. They furnished a ready outlet to the east for the produce of these counties, while the Shenandoah Valley found no outlet for its products except to the north along the natural course of its river, a tributary of the Potomac. The territory lying beyond the Alleghany was forced to buy and sell in the markets of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and even New Orleans.

The sectionalism that these geographical features contributed to was intensified by variant sources of immigration. The English, the Scotch, the Scotch-Irish, the German, and the French Huguenots poured into the colony during the eighteenth century and tended to congregate in one or the other great natural divisions of the state. At a later period the Valley and trans-Alleghany received heavy immigration from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the North. Tidewater, Piedmont, or "back" country, the Shenandoah Valley, the Southwest, and what is now West Virginia became sooner or later

¹² Wealth, Resources and Hopes of the State of Virginia, Reprint from *Daily Southern Argus*, Norfolk, 1857, p. 7.

contentious political entities. Early legislative debates reflect the interests of these natural divisions, and the general history of the state may easily be read in this configuration.¹³ Slavery soon separated the people of Tidewater and the western counties as it did the North and South at a later day. As early as December 17, 1794, Jefferson, in writing to William Branch Giles, said, "Make friends with the trans-Alleghanians, they are gone if you do not."¹⁴

The wealth and influence — maintained, it was charged by the western county delegates in the House, by undue representation in the Assembly,¹⁵ — lay in the Tidewater country; that is, in the lower valleys of the James, the Rappahannock, and the Potomac rivers. The large slave-holders and the large estates were here. As the population spread westward the feudal aspect of society became less and less marked. The eastern counties, predominantly English, were, for the most part, traditionally adherents of the Church of England. Piedmont, early protestant against Tidewater and the lower Valley, was preponderantly Scotch-Presbyterian. The chief antagonists of the Episcopal Church in Tidewater were the Baptist societies, representing a political and ecclesiastical protest against the old order. The Valley¹⁶ and Trans-

¹³ *Vide* Ambler, Charles H., Sectionalism in Virginia, 1776-1861, for such an interpretation. ¹⁴ Ford, *op. cit.* VI, 55.

¹⁵ *Vide* Alexandria *Herald*, June 3, 1816, for sectional differences and unequal representation in the Assembly. An address "To the People of the Commonwealth of Virginia," signed by twenty-two men from four northern counties and six West Virginia counties represents that:

"20 counties in Tidewater contain 53,443 white population.

"20 counties in Upper Country contain 250,323 white population, yet each have the same number of Delegates (two for each county).

"49 counties adjacent in the east and south have a majority of the whole number of representatives in the House. These counties contain only 204,766 white population, which is less than half the population of the state by 72,138 souls. In the Senate the inequality is worse. . . . Tidewater, with a population of 162,712, has 7 senators. The total number of senatorial districts is 24. By the law of 1792 the territory west of the Blue Ridge was divided into 4 senatorial districts. It contains 3/5 the area of the whole state and has 212,036 population. The whole population of the state is 553,809. It follows that the country west of Blue Ridge is entitled to 9 Senators instead of 4, etc."

¹⁶ *Fredericksburg Virginia Herald*, August 13, 1817. A traveler says: "The Valley formed by the Blue Ridge and North Mountain is settled principally by Germans or their descendants whose manners are not calculated to please a man from the lower country. The land is pretty equally divided, the farms small and in the highest state of cultivation. The inhabitants are honest, industrious and frugal to an extreme. Luxury and vice are strangers among them." *Vide also* Wayland, The German Element in the Valley of Virginia, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, IX, X.

montane Virginia, as has been said, made other distinct geographical units, and were, therefore, independent in social composition and in tendencies toward independent social constitution.

Virginia, it may be truthfully said, was a unit in name only. It became in fact a people segregated into many sections, and hopelessly divided by the Great Barrier; the East and West growing daily apart in distribution and character of wealth, in religion and customs. The very geography, as a contemporary thinker put it, tended "to diffuse population and capital and prevent concentration of both."¹⁷ Unity of purpose was impossible without unity of need and a common practice. Not only was it difficult to get concerted action, it was difficult to secure agreement on pressing legislation touching the large and material enterprises for internal improvement. The same writer aptly summarizes this whole phase of the discussion:

"The causes of delay in beginning and completing her works were obstructions of an extraordinary character, not hindering another state, new or old. Her social and territorial conformation not only segregated her communities but detached her plans of public improvement in separate and competing schemes: they wanted unity entirely and concentration."¹⁸

This was the Virginia — 748,308 people scattered over 64,284 square miles, extending from the Dismal Swamp to the Panhandle of the present state of West Virginia, from the sea to the western border of Kentucky — that Jefferson and his compatriots attempted to reorganize into a single, like-minded commonwealth, a "Republic of Virginia," as Jefferson was pleased to dream of it. It was this Virginia that he wished to remake politically into his ideal democratic state in which government would play a minimum rôle and aristocracy no part whatever.

To summarize Jefferson's position it might be said that for nearly a half century he contended for several schemes of education all dominated by his fear of government, all consistent with his individualistic theory, and all involving the same features:

¹⁷ Wealth, Resources and Hopes of Virginia, Reprint from *Daily Southern Argus*, Norfolk, 1857, 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

- (1) A single system of schools from the primaries to the University that would destroy the dual system of the colony and close the gap between rich and poor, placing the talent of both at the disposal of the state and guaranteeing an intelligent electorate and a trained leadership.
- (2) Local taxation and local control of elementary education rather than the centralization of power which would spring from state subsidy, and which would, as he saw it, retard the progress of democracy by encouraging community dependence.

The fact will always remain that the vast majority of the communities did not respond to this program. There is sound philosophy in holding, as Jefferson did, that bureaucracy is a poor substitute for the tyranny of kings and aristocracy and that centralization of authority may, even as implied in Rousseau's *volonté générale*, finally supplant liberty with paternalism. Unfortunately, in his deep-seated distrust of government, Jefferson failed to see that a powerless state may often mean helpless communities. Efficient democracy presupposes effective machinery for accomplishing its great purposes. The promotion of individualism intensifies the difficulty in creating such machinery for public education. To expect local initiation from one class not sufficiently interested in education to pay the price or too pressed by the exigencies of pioneer life to build schools, and from another class already supporting a system of private schools, was to confound democracy with inefficiency. State subsidy and centralization of school authority have been the chief means of perfecting a system of popular education and of convincing people of the value of taxation for it. Common schools of reasonable efficiency have become a fact in the state only since their administration has rested upon the assumption that education is a state rather than a local concern.¹⁹

Education was at a low ebb during that period after the Civil War when the democratic demand for a school on every

¹⁹ *Vide* work of Coöperative Education Association and the Citizens' Leagues propaganda work of the State Department of Education, 1904-14; the enthusiasm of Dr. Wm. H. Ruffner, 1870-82; Richard R. Farr, 1882-6; Gov. Andrew J. Montague, 1900-04; and Joseph D. Eggleston, Supt. of Public Instruction, 1906-13, *et al.*

man's farm scattered meanly equipped, frightfully neglected, and poorly attended schoolhouses over the state and left them to the tender mercies of communities, which never assembled for community action. Coöperation of neighborhoods in the difficult work of selecting common sites for permanent schoolhouses, that must of necessity be unsatisfactory to many, and voluntary assessment of freeholders each year for the support of schools difficult to reach and not very well taught, was, indeed, a great demand of a people unaccustomed to collective self-expression. It would seem, therefore, in the light of contemporary experience, that Jefferson's insistence on an extreme decentralized school policy must have retarded primary school legislation and development in the early nineteenth century quite as much as his philosophy of education in a democracy may have stimulated the rising spirit of Jacksonianism in the West.

CHAPTER III

THE PHILANTHROPIC-RELIGIOUS MOTIVE IN EARLY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFERED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR COMMON SCHOOLS

WHEN, in 1642, the House of Burgesses confirmed the will of Benjamin Syms establishing a free school, it went on record as encouraging "others in like pious performances." In the attitude thus expressed is revealed the accepted motive for the establishment of the Colonial American elementary free school. Even in New England such schools were primarily voluntary enterprises, impelled by the philanthropic-religious spirit; for though Calvinism vaguely suggested the broader politico-social motive of modern theory, the more customary philanthropic idea prevailed. Democracy was a principle to be learned as a child becomes acquainted with a toy which at first pleases him but which is beyond his manipulation, an ideal to be realized in the fullness of experience and experiment; and Virginia was not far behind the actual practice of the other states during the first decades of the Republic. Professor Paul Monroe has pointed out that the American public school system, in its nonsectarian, common, free school character did not find full expression until the generation after the Civil War.¹

As a matter of fact, before common schools could be generally accepted, both North and South had to be democratized. If, before the Civil War, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York made distinctive advance toward this democratic institution, discrimination between the children of the relatively rich and poor was almost universally maintained in these states till late in the century by the so-called "rate" bills common to the Northern states. The distinction was maintained in Pennsylvania and the states south of it by the English "charity" school system. In principle these systems were alike odious and were, as Charles Fenton Mercer pointed

¹ Unpublished lecture notes, Teachers College, Columbia University.

out in 1826, well calculated "to implant in early life the feelings of humiliation and dependence in one class of society and superiority and pride in an other . . . which are alike incompatible with the future harmony and happiness of both."^{1a}

Characteristic English benevolence, then, motivated the founding of the early town "charities," the Lancasterian and Infant schools, the Sunday schools, and other private, rural, and urban educational enterprises in behalf of the Virginia poor. The creation of the Literary Fund in 1811, it will be seen, was a provision for the "Education of the Poor." And, as up to the time of the creation of this fund, the education of the poor had been cared for largely through private benevolence, it is quite natural that the schools, already doing charity work, should have been subsidized by this fund rather than that a new common school system should have sprung full grown from the minds of a very small group of far-seeing political theorists. But the failure to make even a beginning of a state system of common schools at this point revitalized the aristocratic conception of education and correspondingly weakened the chances for adequate provision when the spirit of democracy should become strong enough to make its wants known. In 1818 the idea of a public school system in which the state was placed in the relation of a common mother was quite generally repudiated by the Democrats as a menace to individual rights and as too reminiscent of the abuses of government in the Old World. Likewise, in New York, early effort at state supervision was bitterly opposed, and in 1837 Massachusetts created a state board of education but failed to create a state superintendent.

^{1a} Mercer, Charles Fenton, Discourse on Popular Education, a commencement address, College of New Jersey, Princeton, 1826. This Discourse, not hitherto included in sources of the period, is one of the most critical analyses of the early American common school available. C. F. Mercer, b. Fredericksburg, Va., July 16, 1778; d. "Aldie," his Loudoun County estate, May 4, 1858. A graduate of Princeton, Mr. Mercer was a Federalist in politics, serving in the state legislature in 1810-17, U. S. Congress 1818-40, and a member and temporary chairman of the Virginia Constitutional Convention, 1829-30. He was an ardent friend of common schools, a projector and charter president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, and an official and promotor of the American Colonization Society, making a trip to Europe as late as 1853 in the interest of the abolition of negro slavery. He served in the War of 1812 and later commanded a brigade of state militia. For his biography *vide* Garnett, James Mercer,—Biographical Sketch of Hon. Charles Fenton Mercer; *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, XVII, 220-23.

At any rate the impetus for public elementary schools in Virginia may be found in the voluntaristic movements to give the poor the power to read and write, and to redeem them from the isolation and moral depravity of the New Settlements. Hence any study of the free school movement must take into account the enthusiasm of private enterprise and religious zeal. The Virginia free school system before the Civil War came, in fact, largely through the gradual development of these coöperative efforts to carry the benefits of "English" education to the lower and middle classes of the state.

THE CHARITY AND LANCASTERIAN SCHOOLS

The Virginia town "charity" school was much like its English prototype. It was generally supported by private subscription, sometimes by municipal endowment or small appropriation. Quite frequently it was aided by lottery. Beyond sanctioning their incorporation, the state contributed nothing to the success of these schools till 1818, when, as has been said, they were subsidized as part of the new state "poor" school system established under the school statutes of that year. Charity schools had been established before this act in Norfolk, Richmond, Fredericksburg, Alexandria, Staunton, and, in fact, wherever there was a large enough community to support them.

These schools were either given over wholly to orphan or charity pupils, literally "charities," or as select or private schools they received the poor on scholarships while other pupils paid tuition. The name of George Washington himself and of Martha, his wife, is associated with a charity school in Alexandria as early as 1785. In December of that year Washington wrote the trustees of Alexandria Academy:

"It has long been my intention to invest, at my death, £1000, in the hands of trustees, the interest of which is to be applied in instituting a school in the town of Alexandria for the purpose of educating orphan children, or the children of such indigent parents as are unable to give it. . . . I will, until my death, pay the interest thereof, to wit, £50 annually. . . . It is my intention to apply this to that sort of education as would be most extensively useful to people of the lower classes of citizens, viz, reading, writing, and arithmetic, so as to fit them for mechanical pursuits."²

² Cited by U. S. Commissioner of Education, Report 1872, 343. The Commissioner points out that "Two girls were admitted upon the condition that General Washington shall explain it to be consistent with his intentions that girls

In April of the following year a school was opened. Every town had its charity school and every county attempted to care for its poor. Among the early statutes of incorporation we find that of the Male Charity School of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1796, empowering the mayor and commonalty to act as its trustees.³ In 1808 a Female Charity School was established there under the same auspices.⁴ A school of much the same character, actuated by the same spirit, and "aided by thirteen gentlemen," was created in 1814 in the same city for "free blacks . . . to impress on their hearts the important principles of religion, to give them such instruction as will enable them to get their living in an honest way and prevent them running into crime."⁵

The extension of these Virginia "charities" was, as elsewhere in America and England, made possible by the economy and mechanical efficiency of the well-known monitorial or Lancasterian method of mutual instruction. Just as the Sunday school became a chief agency in arousing the wealthy country gentleman to a realization of the moral depravity of his poor neighbors, so the monitorial system appealed to the imagination of people in the towns by a certain superficial efficiency in getting results with large numbers of children at an incredibly low cost.⁶ The Lancasterian school was hailed as an administrative boon,⁷ a discovery of importance

may be taught in this school." That General Washington approved the admission of girls is to be inferred from the fact that these were retained and others afterward admitted. "The school hours at that date were as follows: 'From the 1st of May to the 1st of September from 6 to 8 and from 9 to 12 A.M., and from 2 to 5 P.M.; and from the 15th of September to the 1st of May from 9 to 12 A.M., and from 2 to sunset.'"

³ *House Journal*, Dec. 13, 1796, A Financial Report, 1812, of this school gives total expenditures of \$707.48: \$250 to teachers; \$140 board for boys; \$161 for shoes and clothes, rent for schoolroom \$33, etc. *Virginia Herald*, Feb. 4, 1812.

⁴ Hening, III, 418

⁵ Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald*, 1814.

⁶ Lancaster, it is said, lost himself in dreamy computations of how long it would take to educate the world by so simple a device. Cf. article on the Lancasterian System and the Gary Schools, C. L. Robbins, *New York Times*, March 26, 1916.

⁷ Sir Joshua Fitch, in his *Educational Aims and Methods*, p. 356, reprints an English handbill announcing a lecture by this gentleman and stating these "principles":

ROYAL LANCASTERIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Joseph Lancaster, the Inventor of the above system, intends to deliver a Lecture on its *nature* and *advantages*, at the *Freemasons' Tavern*, Great Queen Street, Lincolns Inn Fields, on the Evening of the Day called *Monday*, the 1st of *Seventh Month*, (July) 1811.

The peculiar advantages of this system are that one master (often a lad from

to mankind. In its economy and simplicity of operation it showed the way to the establishment of schools that would run themselves, and without public taxation, or at least with a minimum of tax. It aroused enthusiasm among people hitherto indifferent. Virginia cities were among the first to interest themselves in this new scheme of cheap popular education that answered their need but did no violence to custom. Here, again, Virginia showed only a natural desire, and a desire characteristic of early Americans generally, to have schools but to avoid public taxation for them. As early as 1809, a Richmond paper publishes "a plan for the education of 10,000 poor children by establishing schools in country towns and villages, for uniting works of industry with useful knowledge."⁸

The Virginia Lancasterian schools seem to have taken their inspiration from Mr. Robert Ould, an American disciple and personal representative of Joseph Lancaster, who opened an approved school of the method at Georgetown, District of Columbia, in the fall of 1811. In Ould's first report he speaks of the interest his school is arousing in the South. "Even the natives of the Carolinas, of the Alleghany or Blue Ridge of Mountains, show their delight and strong desire to have schools established among them."⁹ In the same report he says, "Alexandria became alike interested with the merits of the system . . . accordingly a house was erected and a teacher qualified. The establishment contains 150 children and is capable of accommodating 360. . . . Shortly after a lady from the same town nobly came forward to become acquainted with the principles of the institution. This lady's

fourteen to eighteen years of age) can be rendered competent to the government of a school containing from 200 to 1000 Scholars. The Expense of Education for each individual will also diminish in proportion as the Number under the care of the same master increases.

The System of Order and Tuition serves in lieu of experience and discretion in the Teacher, whose qualification consists only of a small degree of Elementary Knowledge. Five Hundred children may spell at the same time. A whole school, however large, may read and spell from the same book. The Master will be wholly relieved from the duty of Tuition and have for his charge that of frequent inspection of the Progress made by the Pupils.

⁸ Richmond *Enquirer*, May 23 and 26, 1809, an exhaustive review under the great caption, SCHOOL! SCHOOL! SCHOOL!—of the Lancasterian System as published by Edinburgh *Review*, 1809.

⁹ Report, Royal Lancasterian Institution for Education of the Poor, 1811, 13.

school contained near 300 scholars and is capable of containing 450.”¹⁰

In addition to these two in Alexandria, Ould reports in 1811, that Petersburg, Winchester, King William County, and Fredericksburg had established monitorial schools. The *Virginia Herald* in 1812 speaks of the establishment in Fredericksburg of such a school, where “both boys and girls are instructed together and those who are able pay a small tuition.” In 1814 “some 20 gentlemen built what is called ‘The Female Lancasterian School’ which was soon abandoned through lack of funds.”¹¹ An account is given in 1815 of a joint Masonic Hall and Charity School. “The first floor,” it is stated, “is devoted to the charity school in which the Lancasterian system is pursued, the second floor to the Masonic lodge.”¹² An issue of the same paper prints the address of the Rev. Samuel Low of the Episcopal Church of Norfolk at the cornerstone-laying of “The Norfolk Lancasterian School, founded by the Common Council of Norfolk Borough, August 1, 1817.”¹³

Efforts were begun on October 14, 1815, to establish by public subscription a charity school in Richmond. On June 27, 1816, the cornerstone of a Lancasterian school was laid, bearing the inscription: “Dedicated to the Elementary Principles of Education, founded by the municipality and worthy, liberal-minded citizens. The children of the Wealthy are taught on most moderate terms and those of the Poor, gratis.”¹⁴ In the dedication address on this occasion it was said that “one of the distinguishing signs of the times is that the injunction of the Messiah, that the poor have the gospel preached unto them,” was being fulfilled in the charity schools and Bible societies. The speaker, referring to the great school legislature of 1815-16, says further:

“At this time, particularly, the value of this improvement cannot be too highly estimated when we consider that the patriotic and enlightened legislators of Virginia who lately increased the Literary Fund will probably in a short time establish public schools for the education of the children of

¹⁰ Robert Ould claims this latter school was the “first female Lancasterian on her own foundation in America.” Report, Royal Lancasterian Institution for Education of the Poor, 1811, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *Virginia Herald*, 1814.

¹² *Ibid.*, July 15, 1815.

¹³ *Ibid.*, August 1, 1817.

¹⁴ Richmond *Enquirer*, June 29, 1816.

the poor throughout the commonwealth. When this auspicious event shall take place the Lancasterian teachers will be the most useful and efficient agents necessary to the accomplishment of the wise view of the General Assembly.”

Joseph Lancaster, in 1819, visited Washington and was accorded the privilege of the Speaker’s chair while Congress was in session. This privilege was extended on motion of Representative Burwell Bassett of Virginia.¹⁵ Bassett and Lancaster exchanged letters, and in the fall of that year the great educator visited the principal Virginia cities. The *Virginia Herald*, for October 30, 1819, states that Joseph Lancaster had that week “favored” Fredericksburg with two lectures on Lancasterianism and that the city was “warmed with the subject and convinced of the soundness of his principles.” With the item is a reprint of “An Ode to Lancaster,” published ten years before in a London paper. On November 21, 1819, the secretary of the local charity school society called a special meeting to discuss certain changes in the administration of the school. These changes, it may be inferred, were suggested by Lancaster himself. Mr. Lancaster lectured in Richmond on November 2 and 5, 1819, before the most distinguished people of the city; the governor, the Episcopal bishop, and many members of the legislature were present.

Petersburg reports to the Second Auditor in 1822 that its quota of the Literary Fund is being expended to educate one hundred and thirty poor children at a monitorial school founded by a bequest of David Anderson and known as the “Anderson Seminary.”¹⁶ Richmond and Norfolk also gave

¹⁵ Richmond *Enquirer*, Feb. 3 and March 4, 1819. The following comment in verse on this visit was made by the Baltimore *Federal Gazette*, reprinted by the *Virginia Herald*, April 21, 1819:

MR. LANCASTER AND MR. SPEAKER CLAY

When slim Speaker Clay, looking up at his chair
Saw that very fat man Joseph Lancaster there,
He said, while with pleasure the pun through him thrilled,
“Sir, I never before saw that chair so well filled!”

The Teacher, well pleased, to reply was not slow;
For witty, though serious, was dignified Jo.
He mildly remarked in the same punning way,
“He who fills the chair is no better than *Clay*.”

¹⁶ *House Journal*, 1823, Second Auditor’s Report, 1882. David Anderson, by his will of June 18, 1812, left approximately \$20,000 for a free school in Petersburg. The fund became available in 1820, the income being united with the town’s Literary Fund quota.

their quota to the Lancasterian societies of their communities. When arguing for the Act of 1829, Mr. Fitzhugh of Fairfax is recorded as saying: "The expenses of education would spring up and the Lancasterian Plan, which multiplies the power of education at least tenfold, would be established to multiply the powers of the new system."¹⁷

It might be added, in this connection, that one other European movement reached Virginia to stimulate primary education in the Literary Fund schools. This was the so-called English Infant School of Wilderspin.¹⁸ The Infant School, modeled largely upon the Lancasterian monitorial system, was meant for children of kindergarten age — from two to five years — whose parents labored during the day. It, of course, had no historical or philosophical relation to Froebel's idea of freedom. It was, in fact, a scheme for drill of large numbers of very young children in subject-matter and moral habits, a system of training rather than an education in the sense of our modern theory. Such a school had been established in New York City in 1825, to supplement the enthusiastically supported higher Lancasterian schools in that city. Boston, it may be interpolated, set its stamp of disapproval on the Infant School in the fall of 1830.¹⁹ In 1827 the Petersburg school commissioners reported to Mr. Brown, "We have reason to believe an Infant School will shortly be set on foot in this town . . . from which we anticipate great advantages to all, but especially to the poorer classes of society." Their next report gives the establishment of a local Infant School Society and states that the school is working well.²⁰

THE SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL

Virginia responded also to the national interest in the Raikes Sunday school.²¹ In fact, the state was a pioneer in the move-

¹⁷ *House Journal*, 1829.

¹⁸ Cf. work of Robert Owen, New Lanark, Scotland, 1799, James Buchanan and Samuel Wilderspin, London, etc.

¹⁹ Boston Annals of Primary Schools, 124. April and Sept., 1830.

²⁰ *House Journal*, 1827-28, Second Auditor's Report, Petersburg.

²¹ The name of Robert Raikes is usually associated with the first "secular" Sunday school in Gloucester, England, 1780, although it may be said that he simply drew attention to its importance in meeting the demands of the factory towns. *Vide* First Annual Report of the Managers' American Sunday School Union,

ment. There is record of a Sunday school in the home of Thomas Crenshaw, a Methodist, in Hanover County, as early as 1786. As a movement the Sunday school may be said to have begun in the state as early as 1812. By 1818 it was enthusiastically proclaimed a possible substitute for the common schools which the Act of 1818 had effectually defeated. One school day in a week assuredly could not have taken the place of a five-day school, but enthusiasts in many places claimed that Sunday school pupils made more progress than did the children in the private English schools. So the school commissioners of Richmond reported in 1827.

As an evangelist to the common free school, the innovation, in fact, did have decided merits. The landlord was stirred benevolently by the “state of knowledge” among his neighbors; just as the gentlemen of the towns had been early moved to establish the various “charity societies for the care and education of the poor children.” The Sunday school, it may be said, was an extension of the common practice on plantations for the master to gather his family, his white dependents, and servants for simple instruction “just before evening prayer.”²² The new movement indirectly promoted the political ideal of common schools by bringing the children of all classes together in the name of religion on terms of perfect equality. Certainly it involved no political theory nor suggested change in government. It is not curious then that the Sunday school was a prime factor in drawing the attention of the rich to the actual educational needs of the poor with an impressiveness that political theory could never have for the conservative. At the same time it accustomed a neighborhood to schools. It was particularly effective in

Philadelphia, May 24, 1825, reprinted in the *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, vol. 8, p. 396; vol. 9, p. 332. This society is accredited with 321 auxiliary local unions, 1150 Sunday schools, 11,295 teachers, and 82,697 pupils. Forty-five thousand children attend schools not affiliated with the union, making a total of 127,000. Indirectly it is estimated that these schools reached more than 1,000,000 children in the United States. Pittsburg, 1809; New York, 1816; Boston, 1816; Philadelphia, 1817, organized schools on this plan. Local records confirm the evidence of this sketch that Virginia was interested in this type of elementary education as early as 1812. In 1833 there were 14,000 children enrolled in 203 Sunday schools in the state. It was the Rev. Mr. Plumer of Petersburg and the Rev. Mr. Talmage of Georgia who proposed the Southern Sunday School Enterprise in the American Union convention of 1833.

²² Calhoun, Arthur W., *Social History of the American Family*, 231.

the country districts, where it must have done much toward suggesting the practicability of a system of country schools.

The Sunday school came in answer to a genuine desire on the part of many people to improve the wretched condition of those poor whites who, after the Revolution, isolated themselves in what the newspapers called "The New Settlements." The negro in contemporary history has isolated himself in much the same way, in such settlements, from the contact of his substantial white neighbors and their educative and civilizing agencies. The depth of the moral depravity and ignorance of these people, no longer under the care of the Church, is the subject of countless letters and editorials in magazines and newspapers. The religious motive is responsible for more than one ingenious plan for the neglected and illiterate. The religious tract was one means used to reach them. A notice in a Fredericksburg paper in 1812 says:

"Should any gentlemen wish to look at a Charitable Plan which has met the approbation of many of the respectable of all denominations, they are solicited to call at Mr. Gray's Book Store where a proposal may be seen for printing small tracts to be distributed among the people of the New Settlements. The honorable and liberal patronage which has been accorded the tract business within a few years, both in England and America, it is hoped will secure every promoter of it from contempt and censure."²³

Within this same week, another "Friendly Address on the Highly Important Subject of Education," by T. Osgood, appeared:

"The subject of education claims the attention of gentlemen of the first talents. And one great object which the writer has in view is to induce them to engage in it. . . . He entreats all of you who are parents not to neglect the education of your offspring, nor those of the poor among you . . . he has made great sacrifices of property and ease toward assisting you in this important duty . . . he has expended to a considerable amount in printing small books and useful pieces for the poor in the New Settlements. In the course of four years past he has procured to be printed more than two-hundred reams of paper into small books and religious tracts for the distribution among the people of the New Settlements. All are invited to take these useful pieces for children, etc., and forward them to the families of the destitute. . . . These may be procured at Messrs. Conrad and Bonsel, Norfolk; Mr. Campbells in Petersburg; Mr. Jones in Richmond, and Mr. Gray's in Fredericksburg.

"The subscriber is now procuring to be made many hundred of little boxes of two sizes; the smaller of which to contain the alphabet, the larger

²³ Fredericksburg, *Virginia Herald*, May 23, 1812.

the decalogue, and a great variety of moral and useful instruction. If the child is so situated that he is denied the privilege of going to school, these boxes have such directions upon them that the child can learn to read without ever seeing a school, provided there is any person in the family who can assist him in pronouncing the letters. It is thought that this plan of instruction, *viz.*, to furnish the children with the letters and set them to composing for themselves, might be introduced to great advantage into the schools of little children.

"As this plan here hinted at contains nothing peculiar to *any mode of civil government or any particular sect of religion*, it is hoped that all may feel disposed to give it a candid examination; and if it be found useful to lend it their patronage and support."²⁴

In an appeal to destroy pauperism a correspondent of the *Virginia Herald* quotes at length a speech of Governor Clinton of New York on public education:

"Those who have so fully lavished their wealth for the relief of indigence know full well the effect produced. No comment can be necessary. Half the amount which passes from the hand of benevolence through the idle pauper to augment the funds of tippling houses, would if employed in the support of Sunday schools, free, and charity schools, . . . in a short time banish pauperism from our vicinity."²⁵

The tract plan failed for the obvious reason that the poor could not read and interpret the tracts. Well-meaning devices to teach them to read failed also because they lacked the motive to learn. The secular Sunday schools, in the absence of other "charities" in the country districts, supplied both the motive and the means. James Mercer Garnett,²⁶ brother-in-law of Charles Fenton Mercer, and himself a warm friend of popular education, was a pioneer in this movement. As early as 1812, according to his grandson, Professor James Mercer Garnett,²⁷ he built a log house on his estate, Elmwood, in upper Essex County, and with the help of the members of his family taught a Sunday school. Later those educated

²⁴ *Ibid.*, May 26, 1812.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1818.

²⁶ James Mercer Garnett, 1770-1843, Member of legislature, 1824-5, U. S. Congress 1805-09, Constitutional Convention, 1829-30. A notable champion of the education of women. Author of *Female Education*, and many educational addresses, the last of which, *Popular Education*, was delivered before the Educational Convention, Richmond, 1841. In addition to his Sunday school venture, Mrs. Garnett and her daughters conducted a private select school for girls at Elmwood, his estate, 1822-30. In 1830 Mr. Garnett himself opened a boys' select school.

²⁷ Address, "James Mercer Garnett, 1770-1843," delivered at Tappahannock, Essex County, Va., 1898, by J. M. Garnett, president, St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland.

in the school and neighbors assisted as teachers. The house was twice enlarged and the number of scholars reached two hundred, some of whom "came from a distance of fifteen to twenty miles and not a few owed their entire education to this school." Investigation must reveal a number of such private Sunday school ventures.

The Episcopal²⁸ and Presbyterian churches of Fredericksburg, in 1816, "hearing of the Sunday schools of Europe and America,"²⁹ divided their catechetical schools into two departments; one devoted to teaching the three r's, particularly reading and spelling, the other to learning portions of the scripture, the psalms, and hymns. The Presbyterian Sunday school report notes:

"The rich and intelligent are made acquainted with the character and wants of the poor and a concern for their welfare exists which was never felt before.³⁰ It has given rise to Dorcas societies and situations are secured by teachers for our pupils. . . . It has changed the appearance of our streets on Sunday. . . . Strangers visit us. A young lady 100 miles west from here after seeing our school has opened a Sunday school in her village. A few young gentlemen have opened an Evening Sunday school in a very destitute place adjacent to this town. . . . One Baptist brother has opened a Sunday school to a very destitute but numerous and important portion of society. . . . Sectarian bigotry and prejudice are yielding to the Christian influence of benevolence."³¹

In June, 1818, "a large number of children were collected and a house erected at Mount Zion on the land of Lawrence Battaile, and set apart for purposes of the institution." Only three out of sixty children knew their letters, but in several

²⁸ The first annual report of the Fredericksburg Episcopal Sunday school society says: "This society was the first of the kind established in Fredericksburg or this section of the state (Mar. 31, 1816)," but this refers to *church* schools. See *Virginia Herald*, Fredericksburg, April 25, 1818.

²⁹ As an evidence of the enthusiasm in England, Rev. Thomas Charles, an Anglican clergyman, speaking of the attempts to reach the English adult poor through the Sunday school, says, "The report of the success of these schools soon spread . . . the illiterate adults began to *call for instruction*. In one county, after a public address on the subject, the adult poor, even the aged, flocked to the Sunday schools in crowds; and the shopkeeper could not immediately supply them with an adequate number of spectacles. Our schools, in general, are kept in the chapels; in some districts farmers, in summer time, lend their barns." Thomas Pole, *History of Adult School*, Bristol, 1816.

³⁰ In Fredericksburg the Sunday schools were not limited to children "destitute of weekly instruction, but include the children of the Male and Female Charity schools attached to the church"—First Episcopal Sunday School Report, Fredericksburg, *Virginia Herald*, April 25, 1818.

³¹ Annual Report of Presbyterian Sunday School, Dec. 15, 1817, in the *Virginia Herald*, Jan. 7, 1818.

months "two thirds of the scholars are classed with the readers and read in the New Testament with facility."³² In 1819 a school was established in Westmoreland that bid fair "to confer most substantial benefits on a destitute neighborhood . . . How solid a foundation of future good may be laid by these blessed associations." In a letter from the superintendent of a country Sunday school near Fredericksburg, we find:

"The progress of the children is inconceivable. On last Sabbath 59 children attended school and 70 are engaged who have voluntarily come forward to receive instruction. . . . As an evidence of the great interest excited among the children, I will mention that they unanimously requested me to teach on Easter Monday and the last Sabbath they begged I would teach on Whitsun Monday. Some children showing such interest and anxiety in this opportunity that they walk six or seven miles to school."³³

A writer from Upper Essex County³⁴ who had opened a Sunday school says:

"Many neighbors had scarcely heard of a Sunday school before. . . . The spectacle displayed by the Sunday school could not be viewed without emotion by any but those who had neither human sympathy nor benevolence. The idea of so many helpless children being placed in a situation to be taught various duties in life . . . made the school not less beneficial to the teachers themselves and the visitors.

"The number of scholars increased until the astonishing number of 156 was enrolled. After a prosperous summer the neighbors were so gratified with the experiment that they voluntarily built a house for . . . the fall and winter. . . . A considerable number of persons worked with such zeal as none of the ordinary motives of labor inspire, and in a short time they erected a comfortable house of logs and clap-boards sufficiently convenient to hold 200 persons."³⁵

This report tells us further that the school was opened and continued throughout the winter with no days lost, increasing attendance, and no cases of "disorderly conduct." At first no grown person entered, but at length a few having had "boldness enough to conquer that false shame . . . the number was increased to thirty. . . . Almost all — children and adults — who began with the alphabet have now learned

³² Second Annual Report, Episcopal Sunday School Society, Fredericksburg, *Virginia Herald*, May 8, 1819.

³³ Fredericksburg, *Virginia Herald*, April 25, 1818.

³⁴ Article unsigned, but author is perhaps James Mercer Garnett, of Elmwood, Essex County, referred to in footnote, p. 33.

³⁵ *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, III 238, reprinted in *Virginia Herald*, Sept. 9, 1820.

to read which many did in eight or ten Sundays." The author of the report continued to elaborate on the improvement in discipline in his new school:

"Effort has been made to dispense with two things usually considered indispensable to success in schools (1) the principle of emulation among scholars; (2) the fear of instructors. The first does more harm than good in exciting the worst passions. Emulation with us is of a kind which instead of having for its object the putting to shame of a fellow, has a reward attainable by all because it is bestowed upon diligence and good conduct alone. [The system suggested is] the award of tickets for attendance and good behavior which are redeemed at the end of the year for a Bible or some other good book without regard to distinction or superior capacity which Deity alone can confer. . . . Desire to excell in intellect is a powerful principle . . . but in a majority of instances it improves the intellect at the expense of the heart."

No punishments, it might be added, were administered except the withholding of tickets and private admonition by one of the superintendents. The school was divided into two parts, with separate teachers and a superintendent for each division: (1) Children and adults learning to read and spell; (2) those reading in the New Testament, learning portions of psalms, etc. These classes recited from three to five lessons each Sunday, but there was no "cutting down." The session lasted four hours. Emphasis was placed upon reading. This report gives the texts in use as follows: New Testament; Episcopal and Watts' Catechism; Watts' Divine Songs; Watts' Hymns for Infant Minds; New York Series: Alphabet, The Primer, The Expositor, The Speller, Readers I and II. These books were taken home by the scholars that they "might be learning something at every leisure time during the week." Church dogma found small place in these Virginia schools. No preference, in fact, was given to any particular sect, but "parents of children chose for them" the catechism they should use. The writer continues:

"The school was opened by one of the Superintendents reading a chapter and short prayer, then followed the lessons for the day, during which the Superintendent examined the copies written at home. One of the Superintendents concluded the day by reading to the whole school some manual or entertaining tract, story or essay of which the works of Miss Hannah More, who has written things especially for Sunday schools, furnish the best that can be procured. The writer believes that every man, woman and child capable of receiving instruction might be taught to read and write in two years."

In 1818 the Rev. Joseph Thomas published at Winchester, in the Valley, "A Discourse dedicated to the World and a Sunday School Song of Kernstown to be sold for the purpose of erecting a building for worship free for all denominations." In his plea for contributions to this school he said:

"The institution which you are now called upon to aid is fixed upon the following plan: It embraces children and people of all descriptions, ages and sex, where they are taught the letters, spelling and reading and the sacred scriptures. There are now about 75 scholars and 8 teachers. Four males who look over and instruct the male children and four females who instruct the female children. These teachers are bound by the constitution of the school to bestow their labor without any pecuniary reward. . . . There is to be a public interview with the scholars every three months. . . . There are also some books necessary . . . articles of diet and comfortable clothing. . . . It could not be presumed that the founder and teachers who voluntarily and without compensation . . . give their time and labor, should in addition defray the expenses necessary to the support of the institution."³⁶

The *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* gives special notice to the organization of Sunday School Unions and the spread of schools.³⁷ On August 7, 1819, it prints a report of the Hungry Sabbath School Society which was instrumental in establishing schools at four points in Hanover and adjoining counties,— Brook Tavern, Hungry Meeting House, Fork Church, and Merry Oaks. Eight such schools were established in Goochland, a county to the west of Richmond. On June 7, 1819, it reprints from the Lynchburg *Press* the proceedings of a society in Nelson County:

"A few persons of both sexes associated themselves for the purpose of gratuitously instructing on the Sabbath any [whites] who might be disposed to embrace the offer but particularly such as are debarred by the necessity of daily earning. It is due to our fair country women . . . that the idea of this institution originated."

The *Virginia Herald* of June, 1819, contains a lengthy report of the Second Anniversary of the Sabbath Schools of Fredericksburg and vicinity. This may be taken as typical

³⁶ Bound with other pamphlets—Sunday School Addresses, New York Public Library.

³⁷ The Rev. John H. Rice, a Presbyterian clergyman, editor of the *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, published at Richmond, 1818-28, justly styles himself "an ardent friend of Sabbath Schools" and under "Review of Religious Intelligence," in that publication throws much light on the spread of these schools. He also devotes much space to Sunday Schools in his *Christian Monitor*.

of the aim and scope of the schools as they were known at that time.

"Their present state is calculated to afford the highest gratification to every benevolent heart. . . . Convinced of the salutary influence of the Sabbath school on all classes of society we hail it as an auspicious event that these institutions are rapidly increasing. . . . We exhibit for the satisfaction of the public a view of all the Sunday schools we know in this section: Fredericksburg 3, Falmouth 1, Port Royal 1, Stafford County 1, Spotsylvania County 1, and 20 others instituted by Rev. William Chester, agent of the Fredericksburg Missionary Society,—34 in all. The schools have afforded instruction to about 2000 children and adults."

In 1824 five hundred children of the Richmond city Sunday schools were received by General Lafayette while the latter was a guest of the city. In that year the Richmond school commissioners indicate that the idea has been long established there and comment as follows:

"The Sunday School holds out flattering promises of future usefulness to the state for the diffusion of knowledge. . . . It has been remarked that a pupil learns more on that day in the Sunday school than in the common school in a week."³⁸

The same report shows 1165 children in attendance in this class of schools alone and that out of their Literary Fund quota the commissioners annually gave the Society thirty cents for each pupil enrolled. This amount was supplemented the following year from the same fund by "\$30 for books and supplies for the Sunday Schools of the City."

In 1826 a Sunday school was formed in Scott County for the "*promotion of Primary Education.*" In the Report of the Commissioners for 1827 there is mention of a Sunday School Society. The commissioners ask aid for it, as "it promises much in favor of learning and good morals among the youth of the country."³⁹ Petersburg, a town of only a few thousand, in 1830 contained twelve schools of all classes open to indigent children.⁴⁰ In 1826 there were four Sunday schools receiving state aid that were "skillfully taught by 88 teachers and faithfully attended by more than 600 children." The fact that a local bookseller, in 1830, kept a large card in the local newspaper advertising himself as the sole agent

³⁸ Second Auditor, *House Journal*, 1826.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1830.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1827.

for the New York *Sunday School Magazine* is, at least, suggestive of a general interest in this type of education in this one locality.

The commissioners of Northumberland County felt, in 1832, that though they had no legal sanction for it they should furnish books to poor children in different Sunday schools of that county. Norfolk County, in 1835, states that large numbers of indigent children of laborers in the Navy Yard are being educated in Portsmouth, "where instruction is rendered more beneficial by the Sunday schools." The Sunday schools of Portsmouth are mentioned in subsequent reports of the Second Auditor.

In concluding this section it will suffice to summarize briefly the general significance of these charitable ventures in extending the common, free school idea. The Sunday school movement, in particular, has been discussed here to show its widespread popularity in Virginia at the very time the theory of popular education was receiving most attention in the press and legislature of the state. Many Virginia people came to see in the Sunday school the realization of their dream of popular education.⁴¹ Others disgusted with the deficiencies of the primary schools of 1818, seriously suggest the substitution of the Sunday school as a state system. "Iota," writing in one of the church magazines of the period, draws the attention of the president and directors of the Literary Fund to the fact that in Richmond and Manchester with "particular and constant care one thousand of the most undisciplined children of those cities have been taught to read and write at an expense of about thirty-four cents per annum."⁴² "And," says Iota, "the benefits of the Sunday schools are not confined to the towns,"

"Let that writer go to the counties of Charlotte, Prince Edward and Mathews and he will learn. I refer to these counties because there are no towns in them and because the experiment . . . has been tried there. . . . Every neighborhood in which the institution has been fairly tried is able to contribute a volume of facts in support of my remarks. I speak what I do know."⁴³

This advocate proceeds to show that the state could, by an expenditure of \$15,000, reach 30,000 poor children through

⁴¹ "Iota," *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, V, 95-7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, VI, 427-8.

the Sunday school, while the Literary Fund schools were expending \$45,000 to reach, in 1823, fewer than 5000 children. Gratuitous teaching was presupposed. Moreover, these volunteer teachers, being imbued with their mission, would, as current experiments were amply proving, give that constant and intelligent supervision over the moral life and intellectual progress of the individual children of the lower classes "so wanting in the eight and ten dollar teachers" of the state primary school system. "*Our legislators may rely upon it that no plan will be, or from the nature of things can be efficient but that which brings individual zeal and charity to operate with unwearied perseverance on individual cases.*"⁴⁴ Iota saw the crudeness of the New Settlements giving way to the "powerful and salutary influence of frequent, familiar, and affectionate intercourse with young gentlemen and ladies of generous disposition, polite manners, and cultivated minds." The Sunday schools would tend to *equalize the difference between the Rich and the Poor*.

A second fact of significance was the nonsectarian influence of the new movement, and, as was just implied, the introduction of improved methods of discipline by which flogging and fools caps and mechanical memory were replaced with higher appeals to children's interests. But, after all, the main influence of the Sunday school lay in the new relation "the reign of Love" made between the Rich and the Poor and the fact that it was the only common school in practice in which the sting of pauperism was not felt by the Poor.⁴⁵ There were no fees and efforts were always made to win the truant back to the school. Parents as wayward and undisciplined as their children were visited, conquered, and invited to come with their children. On Sundays, the spirit of Jeffersonianism was realized; all the children of all the classes met together on perfect equality.

"At any rate, the only difference arises from punctuality, good behavior and attainment; and very often the child of the poor man ranks above his wealthy companion. . . . Too, the teacher uses all the winning methods of kindness to awaken the curiosity of his pupils and give a strong excitement to the mind. Hence it is that scholars, under the influ-

⁴⁴ "Iota," *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, V, 94.

⁴⁵ "A Friend to Learning," *Ibid.*, VIII, 546.

ence of this charity make a progress which seems to many unaccountable. But it is not ordinarily so when a young pauper is sent to the 'Old Field school.'"⁴⁶

Thus, though the Sunday school may not be said to have finally substituted for the common school, it can be justly claimed to have played a peculiarly significant part in the development of the free school idea as modern society has evolved it and as the Virginia people were beginning to accept it.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 546.

CHAPTER IV

THE CREATION OF THE VIRGINIA LITERARY FUND, 1810-11. ATTEMPTS TO SECURE STATE LEGISLATION FOR EDUCATION. LOCAL *vs.* STATE CONTROL IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINIS- TRATION AND SUPPORT

IN colonial Virginia the interests of the established society of the eastern counties and the welfare of the Established Church were one. The Church had been a powerful agency in training the English for leadership, in maintaining the policy of the Crown, and in conserving the social order. The Baptist and other dissenting religious sects, representing both a political and an ecclesiastical movement for democracy, were summarily dealt with in the colony even on the eve of the Revolution. Among the earliest efforts of Thomas Jefferson, in his attempts to eradicate "every fibre of antient and future aristocracy," was that to break the political power and prestige of the Episcopal Church in particular and of ecclesiasticism in general. The advantage of the Church ended, however, with the passing of English control and the desertion of more than two-thirds of the parish priests. Although the General Assembly, by Act of December 9, 1776, guaranteed to the Church its integrity and holdings, in 1802 the Separation Acts reversed this action and forever separated the Church from any direct or indirect part in the state and from any advantage over the other sects.¹

In colonial times each parish church and minister were partially supported by a glebe, or parish lands, set aside by the Crown and reaffirmed by the House of Burgesses as late as 1748. According to Hugh Jones, "In every Parish there is allotted for the Minister a convenient Dwelling House and a

¹ The Episcopal Church of Manchester attempted, in 1804, to break the constitutionality of the Act of 1802, which transferred proceeds from the sale of vacant glebe lands to the Poor Fund. *Case of Turpin vs. Lockett*, VI Call 113. Edmund Pendleton supported the Church's plea, while Judges Tucker and Spencer Roane established its legality. In 1840, in the case of *Selden vs. The Overseers of the Poor*, its constitutionality was finally declared. XI Leigh 132. *Vide* J. P. Branch *Historical Papers*, II, 14-15.

Glebe of about two hundred and fifty Acres of Land with a small Stock of Cattle, ready in some Places as in James Town." With the Separation Acts these lands were taken over by the commonwealth and sold for the benefit of the poor. Only the church buildings remained. Many of these were wantonly destroyed by over enthusiastic democrats or by those who had suffered persecution through the Church.² Whole parishes ceased to exist or were taken over by dissenting congregations. As the Church had controlled education in the colony, its property went, quite naturally, to education under the new régime. Quite naturally too, as public education in the colony had meant education of the orphan and the poor, we find that the county overseers of the poor were made trustees of the funds drawn in large part from the sale of these confiscated Church lands and instructed to care for the poor as the county court and vestry had been required to do under the older statutes. The words "glebe" and "public education" became intimately connected. While the more radical provisions of Jefferson's aldermanic plan of 1796 were ineffectual, still Virginia really laid the foundations of a state school system in assuming from the first that this confiscated Church and other property once held by the Crown should go to the purpose of public education — that is, by social precedent, to the education of the *poor*, the only form of public education that demanded state control and support.

As early as 1780 "certain escheated lands" in Kentucky County were vested in trustees as a "free donation from the commonwealth for public schools in the said county."³ In 1802 the state provided that such glebe lands, the plate of deserted churches, forfeited, unclaimed, and deserted lands, etc., could be sold by the counties on petition and the funds applied to "free" school purposes.⁴ An example of such use of glebe lands for public school purposes — was the provision, in 1808, for Hanover Parish, King George County. "The freeholders and housekeepers of the county are authorized

² Vawter's Episcopal Church of Upper Essex County, according to local tradition, was saved by Mrs. James Mercer Garnett through her claim that the building stood upon the land of the Garnett estate, Elmwood, and was, therefore, in her care.

³ Hening, X, 288.

⁴ *Senate Journal*, 1802. An Act Concerning the Glebe Lands and Churches within the Commonwealth, passed Jan. 12, 1802. *Vide Revised Code, 1803-08*, Vol. I.

to elect seven fit and discreet men of the parish, who shall dispense the glebe funds in maintaining a free school and teachers.”⁵ In 1807 such a school was in operation in Nottoway County.⁶ The sale of the glebe lands in York County in the same year enabled the academy at Yorktown to reorganize. The trustees of Yorktown asked for “sale of glebe” of that parish to be applied to schools, 1807.⁷ The trustees of the New Kent Charity School, incorporated February 4, 1808, were authorized to use the funds from the sale of “the glebes of the parishes of St. Peter and of Blisland . . . for a poor-house, work-house, and a school-house, or houses where poor children may be educated.”⁸ In 1813 Bruton Parish, York County, sold its glebe and what remained of the Mathew Whaley Free School lands.⁹ Prince William, in 1811, created a free school fund by combining a small bequest with the proceeds from the sale of its glebe. “An Act concerning Yeates’¹⁰ Free School,” in Nansemond County, 1810, authorizes the sale of timber from its glebe for the “establishment of two or three free schools” in that county. The General Assembly, December, 1809, permits the sale of land for “a free school” in Middlesex County;¹¹ in 1811, such a sale is allowed for the establishment of “public schools in said county of Albemarle;”¹² four similar sales in the same year were made in James City County.¹³ In 1817 James City established a “poor-house and school”¹⁴ from such a sale.

The term “glebe school” is common in many localities to-day and the fund is still intact in some counties. In Westmoreland County a school revenue is still derived from several “glebe farms.” This fund was originally disbursed by a Poor School society incorporated in 1813. The establishment of the practice of the sale of glebe lands for the education of the

⁵ *House Journal*, 1808, Jan. 1, 51, Acts of Ass. 1811, 101.

⁶ *House Journal*, 1807, 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20. Should also be in County Deed Book, 1807.

⁸ Hening, III, 428, New Series. This statute further states that if the income from such fund proved insufficient for these purposes the necessary balance should be raised by levy on property and collected by the sheriff. This is a splendid example of the English method of administering its poor funds and the traditional method of raising such funds.

⁹ Acts of Assembly, 1813, 116.

¹⁰ *Senate Journal*, 1810, 34.

¹¹ *House Journal*, 1809, 25.

¹² Acts of Assembly, 1811, 29, 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1811.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1816-17, 163.

poor led Virginia eventually to make these confiscations the basis for the first permanent state fund for the support of free schools.

Another example of "free" school support was the private endowment. After the Revolution several colonial legacies for free school purposes were reincorporated. On January 12, 1805, the Syms-Eaton Free School Foundation, dating back to the death, in 1634, of Benjamin Syms, was placed in the hands of a corporate board, "the Trustees of the Syms-Eaton Free School, who must be elected by the freeholders of the county." It was the duty of this board to provide for all children of the county, not able to pay, instruction in the elementary branches "without fee or reward."¹⁵ In 1803 the bequest of John Yeates, 1731, of Nansemond County, was reincorporated by the legislature. From the hire of slaves belonging to the estate, £49 was available that year for free school purposes.¹⁶ The William Monroe bequest, 1767, was with the proceeds from the sale of glebes in Orange County, incorporated into The Orange Humane Society in 1811.¹⁷ Examples of post-Revolutionary bequests for free elementary or primary school purposes are those of David Anderson, 1812, Petersburg; Edward Goode, 1817, Margaret Faulkner, 1817, both of Chesterfield County;¹⁸ Charles Piper, 1820, Accomac; Martin Dawson, 1835, of Nelson County, leaving \$39,500;¹⁹ Colonel Robert Blakey, 1828, of Middlesex County;²⁰ Aaron Hall, 1845, Hanover County; and Samuel Miller, 1869, of Albemarle County, establishing The Miller Manual Labor School in 1874.²¹

Glebe funds, forfeitures, and legacies were not the only sources of revenue for schools.²² An easy way out of taxation

¹⁵ *House Journal*, Jan. 12, 1805, and Jan. 22, 1806.

¹⁶ Virginia School Report, 1885, 49, part third.

¹⁷ Acts of Assembly, 1811, 83.

¹⁸ *House Journal*, Dec. 20, 1818, 58, "two tracts of land and personal property . . . for the establishment of a Free School."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 20, 1818, 58, and Mar. 20, 1841, etc.

²⁰ Acts of Assembly, March 30, 1838. Giving Middlesex County Commissioners \$1000 from the estate of Col. Robert Blakey to assist in the establishment of the District System of Common Schools.

²¹ This school was similar in character to the Norfolk Manual Labor School for indigent boys, 1853, "which employed boys on farms and in useful occupations until they were twenty-one," Acts of Assembly, February 7, 1853.

²² When, in 1811, the Literary Fund was found insufficient, the board was empowered to raise \$39,000 annually by lottery. In 1812 Gen. Barbour suggests a

was the lottery, common to many of the states. In Virginia it was one of the chief methods of providing public funds for all manner of purposes.²³ Roads, bridges, public, Masonic and society halls, many churches, and even the geographical researches of one gentleman, were financed by the lottery. In fact, where public tax was impossible and subscriptions failed, the lottery succeeded. In a sense, it may be regarded as an early form, a forerunner in aim of our modern bond issue for school purposes. The charity school at Fredericksburg Academy, 1789; Transylvania Seminary (later Transylvania University), 1790, are a few of a number of schools built, or partially built, by money from this game of chance which Virginia sooner or later questioned, but only gradually gave up.

A direct tax on property in support of schools is exceptional, though it does appear in the early statutes. By Act of 1806 the town of Charlottesville was authorized to elect trustees who should have the authority to lay a levy on property, personal and real, to the extent of \$200 for the purpose of establishing a "public school or seminary."²⁴

"Public schools," "free schools," "education," are common terms in the proceedings of the General Assembly in the first decade of the nineteenth century; but no bills for the establishment of public schools are mentioned, except those petitions for glebe schools that, at best, really represent a readjustment of the colonial poor law to the needs of the commonwealth. Quite naturally, the demand for state aid centered on higher education and arose among the well-to-do and liberally educated. In 1806 Mr. Semple presented a bill for the "establishment of the University of Virginia and to

state lottery for the benefit of schools (*vide* H. J. 1811, 1812). It is interesting to note that the General Assembly of Virginia granted a lottery in 1826, to relieve Mr. Jefferson's financial difficulties, who was about to be, as Mr. Cabell says, "deprived of his estate or abridged in his comforts." *Senate Journal*, April 20, 1826. *Richmond Enquirer*, Feb. 14, 1826.

²³ Private lotteries were prohibited in Virginia in 1779; but from 1785 to 1805 there were more than fifty lotteries permitted by statute — see index, Hening's Supplement, 1785 to 1806. An omnibus Lottery Act, Dec. 20, 1790, provided for: Transylvania (Ky.) Seminary; church buildings in Warminster, Petersburg, Alexandria, Shepards Town, etc.; academies, at Southampton and Rodfish Gaps; a paper mill near Staunton; streets in Alexandria; a bridge in Portsmouth; the Amicable Society of Richmond; and for the benefit of Nathaniel Twing's geographical researches. Hening's Supplement, Dec. 20, 1790.

²⁴ Hening, New Series, III, 255.

open a subscription for that purpose.”²⁵ Governor George Cabell, brother of Joseph C. Cabell, had spoken strongly on the “need of literary institutions” that year, as Governor James Monroe had done before him, 1801–02.²⁶ Governor John Tyler, in his message to the legislature in 1809, strikes out boldly and vigorously for state appropriation for education, particularly higher education. He assails the legislature for “its failure, by reason of a fatal apathy and a parsimonious policy, to provide state schools.” He may have been carried away in his effort to force the legislature into action, but his statements must be essentially correct, so far as state action was concerned, when he says: “Thirty-three years have passed . . . and not one single, complete seminary of learning has been established (civil or military) in this great and wealthy state in addition to those which existed under auspices much less favorable than the increased population and resources of our country afford; except what has been effected by lotteries and some small, additional aids not arising immediately from the state. It is true [referring to the provision of 1796] that a faint effort was made some years past to establish schools; . . . but in that solitary instance the courts had discretionary powers and did nothing, . . . to the disgrace of our county courts and the great disadvantage of the people.”

He continues:

“He must be a wealthy citizen, indeed, who can educate one son. There cannot be a subject of more importance to a free government. . . . A stranger might think we had declared war against the Arts and Sciences. . . . A proper diffusion of knowledge is the only certain means of accomplishing so glorious a work [that of upbuilding the state], . . . and not letting the genius of Virginia languish into apathy and cold neglect.”²⁷

The existence of many local charity funds indifferently administered, the recognized looseness with which the local appropriations for the poor were audited, the agitation for a

²⁵ *House Journal*, Jan. 18, 1806, 81.

²⁶ See Governors’ Messages in *House Journal*, Monroe, 1801–02; Cabell, 1806–08; Tyler, 1809, etc. It is uncommon from this period on for a governor to omit a paragraph on the need of education, literary institutions, etc., from his annual message.

²⁷ *House Journal*, 1809, Tyler’s message to the legislature. It is very obvious that Jefferson was identified with this movement, having just returned to Virginia after his service as president of the United States. *Vide* letter from Jefferson to John Tyler in 1810, Ford, IX, 275.

state university, etc., raised the question of the efficient disposition of these sources of income. In the fall of 1809 a special committee in the House of Delegates offered a bill "to appropriate certain escheats, confiscatures, and forfeitures to the encouragement of learning." This bill passed the House January 29, 1810, and was signed with the concurrence of the Senate, February 8, 1810.²⁸ The authorship of this bill, curiously enough, is claimed for both Governor James M. Barbour, a friend of common schools, and a leader in many progressive movements, and for Charles Fenton Mercer, also an ardent champion of popular education and a staunch Federalist.²⁹ The fund established under the bill was to be known thereafter as "The Literary Fund of Virginia." It became the foundation of all future state school legislation and an instrument, when wisely administered, of direct state control in the spread of educational opportunity.³⁰

The Second Auditor of the State Treasury, James Brown, Jr., of Mecklinburg, was under the Act instructed to open an account with the treasurer to be known as the Literary Fund. The Act states: "The Fund will be divided and appropriated as the next legislature sees best adapted to the promotion of literature, *provided always* that . . . the fund be appropriated for the sole benefit of a school or schools in each county

²⁸ *House Journal*, Feb. 8, 1810; *Acts of Assembly*, 1810.

²⁹ The counter claims of Barbour and Mercer may be found in the *Virginia Farmer's Register*, 1836, 685, and in *Popular Education*, C. F. Mercer, 1826, appendix, p. xcii, respectively. Barbour was, indeed, speaker of the House of Delegates in 1809, and, no doubt, appointed the committee that brought in the bill that created the fund. In 1812 he became governor and president of the Literary Fund. Mercer was a member of the General Assembly, but was not a member of the committee just referred to. In an address, printed in the *Farmer's Register*, Mr. Barbour warmly states that *he* is the originator of the Literary Fund and that only a few years before he had produced the original bill and proved before witnesses that it was in his handwriting! In his Discourse on Popular Education, Mercer simply says in the appendix: "The bill of 1810, the report of the committee of finance, and the resolution which followed it were given by the same member of the House of Delegates." The resolution and report were by Mr. Mercer, *House Journal*, 1816, 177, 199. Mr. Randolph, in his *Early History of the University of Virginia*, xxxiii, draws attention to the fact that J. C. Cabell was one of the committee. "Further," he says, "it now appears that it was drawn by James M. Barbour."

³⁰ The Virginia Literary Fund in 1916 amounts to \$3,115,894.62; its income with the annual state tax for school purposes, amounts to \$2,751,821.67. Through it the state is able to control educational development by supplementing local funds and by paying a large part of superintendents' salaries, thus making them state officers controlled by the Board of Public Instruction. *Vide* Constitution of Virginia, 1902. For financial statement of the fund, see the Annual Report of R. C. Stearnes, State Superintendent, 1915-16.

. . . subject to such orders as the General Assembly shall hereafter direct.”³¹

This “direction” is cast into the “Act to Provide for the Education of the Poor,”³² February 12, 1811, in which is made a “solemn protest” against any future legislature’s misapplying the Literary Fund to any other purpose than that of the “*Education of the Poor . . .* an object equally humane, just, necessary; involving alike the *interests of humanity* and the *preservation of the constitution*, laws, and liberty, of the . . . commonwealth.” The management of the fund was vested in a board of the president and directors of the Literary Fund (comprised of the following state officers by virtue of their office: the governor, lieutenant governor, treasurer, attorney general, and president of the Court of Appeals), “who shall, as soon as sufficient funds be provided, establish schools for the Education of the Poor in each and every county; and who shall, moreover, appoint an agent in each county to look after the returns to the Fund and to prevent misappropriation.”³³

As the fund in December, 1811, was only \$12,904.60, yielding without increment an annual income of about \$1000, the board was empowered to “raise by lottery annually for seven years a sum not over \$30,000.” The first Report of the Board, submitted to the legislature December 6, records:

“The best intelligence express their strong sense of the utility of the institution [the Literary Fund]. There are many difficulties due to the infancy of such an establishment, . . . but we think the Literary Fund will reflect lustre on the commonwealth and will promote happiness; and by a diffusion of information so essential to liberty, will hand down our free and happy institutions, etc.; . . . and that a general system of instruction will eventually be realized.”³⁴

The game of chance, however, proved a poor method of supplementing the fund. The report suggests that the Assembly give the management of the lottery to others as they had “difficulty in disposing of tickets, and made little out of

³¹ Supplement, Act of General Assembly, 1807-12, 48, 49. *Ibid.*, 67, 68. Chapter LXII—note the change from the indefinite title of 1810: “To the encouragement of learning.”

³² Acts of Assembly, 1811, 8.

³³ On June 15, the first Literary Fund Board was organized and it promptly appointed such agents in every county in the state. A quasi-system of state schools may be said to have been created with these appointments.

³⁴ *House Journal*, Dec. 6, 1811.

it."³⁵ The product of two years' growth added only \$8,801.40. At best, the three or four thousand dollars a year income would go but a short way toward meeting the needs of the state. Subsequent reports³⁶ and acts of 1812-15 deal with the manner of collecting fees and the methods of augmenting and investing the fund; for the War of 1812 drained the resources of the state and diverted interest from the cause.

Governor James Barbour, in his message to the Assembly, November 30, 1812, speaks of the immediate propriety of establishing some "Literary Institutions. . . . No effort has been made to foster the means of Education. . . . The Republican legislature has never since the first moment of its existence contributed one cent to an establishment of this kind." The purport of his message is the need of an ample state appropriation to supplement the Literary Fund or the instituting of a great state lottery under the auspices of the Literary Fund and directed by the legislature itself. Governor Barbour continues: "If the state helps out, the progressive augmentation of the Fund affords flattering prospect that the President and Directors may be enabled to establish a school, or schools, in each county sooner than they originally expected. . . . Its vital importance recommends a further appropriation from the Legislature."³⁷

The Second Annual Report of the Literary Fund placed the amount at \$21,705.40. This time Governor Barbour recommends a "State Lottery Commission,—members of which shall be exempt from other public employment and to whom a small compensation might be given,"—whose duty it should be to augment the fund. "This mode," he says, "has been adopted by sister states with great success. While it gives confidence to those who are opposed to adventure in lotteries, it renders their drawing certain, since the state can, without difficulty, retain for its own benefit all shares not disposed of. If a lottery is objected to as *improper*, though we have a law against it, it is notorious that large sums of

³⁵ Supplement to Acts of General Assembly, 1807-12, 127. See "Act to prevent unlawful gaining, etc.," Feb. 20, 1812, in which lotteries and raffles were prohibited under penalty of forfeiture of the whole sum to be raised—*such sum to go to the Literary Fund*.

³⁶ *House Journals*, Dec. 14, 1812; May 13, 1813; Dec. 27, 1813; Nov. 7, 1814; etc.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 30, 1812.

money are annually expended by our citizens in the promotion of lotteries in neighboring states leaving us their evils without their advantages. Let us establish a state lottery and interdict those of other states.”³⁸ On motion of Charles Fenton Mercer, the appropriate House committee, of which he was chairman, took over the resolution for a Lottery Commission for consideration, but there is no record that anything came of it.

It is interesting to recall at this point that Jefferson was President of the United States, 1801-09, and, therefore, somewhat removed from state politics during the years just preceding the creation of the Literary Fund. Although in 1816 he pronounced the fund a sound provision, the board was entirely representative of the East and its interests and smacked too much of “the powers of executives and councils” to accord with his theory of government. In commenting on the trend of legislation he points out that “he had rather withdraw his support entirely than see an institution so necessary to the state managed *for*, rather than *by*, the people.” . . . “Why not,” he said, “commit to the Governor and council the management of all our farms, mills, and merchant stores?”³⁹

Other critics of the Literary Fund soon arose. Constant accusations against the president and directors were early made and continued until the end of the ante-bellum period.⁴⁰ The board was pressed to carry out the somewhat indefinite

³⁸ *House Journal*, Report signed by James M. Barbour, Dec. 14, 1812. The present constitution of West Virginia provides, in addition to a State Board of Education, an ex-officio “Board of the School Fund,” comprised of the governor, superintendent, auditor, and treasurer, whose duty it is to invest and manage the permanent funds of the state. In Virginia there is but one board.

³⁹ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 54. Ford, Jefferson, VII, 494. “Private enterprize manages much better all concerns to which it is equal.” Bishop George W. Doane, in an address before the Education Convention of Trenton, N. J., January 27, 1838, indicates the extent to which this fear of government affected progress in other states: “It is said that there are prejudices against a Board of Education and a Superintendent. We can hardly think they are general. If so our appeal is to the good sterling sense of the people of New Jersey. Is there a turnpike road, or a steamboat, or a bank, or a cotton factory whose affairs are not intrusted to a board of managers? Is there a mill in all the state without a miller, or a locomotive in the land without an engineer? Is the education of the people of less importance than all these? Or is the system of education to be the only case of a machine that goes alone?” Barnard, Report of Commissioner of Ed., 1867-68, 318, footnote.

⁴⁰ This is an interesting parallel to the investigation into and the accusations against the English charity funds of the same period. *Vide* speech of Brougham in English Parliament, as quoted in the Richmond *Enquirer*, April 27, 1818; also Hammond, *The English Town Labourer, 1760-1825*, 56-58.

provisions of the Act of 1811. The annual reports clearly indicate the difficulties and the ineffective laws governing the management of the endowment and the need of a board with more time to give to it. Succeeding governors, who were also presidents of the board, urged concerted action on some plan of common schools. The tendency, however, was to stress the need, as Governor Barbour urged in 1812, of "some Literary Institution," i.e., the higher schools, although it will be recalled that the fund at its creation was solemnly dedicated to "the sole benefit of a school or schools in each county."

Jefferson, now in permanent retirement at Monticello, renews his efforts for public education. The "University of Virginia" becomes his last great care. In a letter to Peter Carr, a trustee of Central College, he outlines his plan for a public school system, based, as he said, on a "study of the organization of the best seminaries in other countries and with the opinions of the most enlightened individuals." His chief interest, now, is to give intellectual leadership to the state through the establishment of an institution "where every branch of *science deemed useful at this day*, should be taught in its highest degree."⁴¹ In referring to the elementary school, he insists that "every citizen should receive an education proportioned to the condition and pursuits of his life," dividing such citizens, according to custom, into the two traditional classes, the "laboring and the learned." Both classes should attend the elementary school together, studying "reading, writing, arithmetic as far as fractions, roots and ratios, and geography." But upon graduation from the elementary school, where they study the three r's and geography, the two classes separate:

- (1) those destined for labor will engage in the business of agriculture or enter apprenticeships of handcrafts.
- (2) their companions, destined to the pursuit of science, will proceed to college, where the learned class will again subdivide into:

⁴¹ Many years later, Dec. 22, 1824, Jefferson writes Cabell, when the latter advises withholding aid from the primary schools, and gives expression to a second principle which may account for the failure to put the Poor Schools on a common school basis: "Let this with all other intermediate academies be taken up in their turn . . . to give to that singly will be a departure from *principle*."

- (a) those destined for the learned professions as a means of livelihood.
- (b) the wealthy, who may aspire to share in the conducting of the affairs of the nation or to live with usefulness and respect in the private walks of life.

Both of these sub-sections will require instruction in all the higher branches of useful science — language, mathematics, and philosophy — but only the professional group will go on for further preparation.

This plan of Jefferson's, so strongly emphasizing the "General Schools" and giving so small a place to elementary education, helped bring about the widening gap between the university party and the classes, particularly in the West, to whom the university offered no boon. We find J. C. Cabell in the Senate as Jefferson's authorized agent to induce the legislature to take over Central College; to promote the interests of a great and entirely new state institution, "our most holy cause," as Cabell later expressed it. That the university movement injured the free school movement there is no doubt. Much later, in 1822 in fact, Cabell admits that "we are at war with democracy and must do something to placate the primary school support."

Both governors' messages and reports of the Literary Fund of this period, 1813-15, urge the greater need of higher "seminaries of learning." Although Governor Nichols, in his annual message of December, 1815, pleads for legislation creating schools "widely and equally distributed through the country," he has more in mind the loss to the state of students going to other states for academic and collegiate training, than the failure of the average child to receive elementary education.

The Report of the Literary Fund for the same years says,

"This small matter [of loss in money] is not to be compared to our young men, estranged by absence from the customs and principles of their parents and ancestors, who return in a degree *aliens* to their native land."

In response to the request of the legislature of 1815, for a "Plan of Public Education Embracing a University," the Literary Fund Board in its report

"hails with delight the liberal spirit of improvement which dawns upon the country. . . . In free states it is necessary that the public will should be enlightened. . . . It is necessary in the formation of any system of this sort to consult the peculiar situation of the country for which it is intended, i.e., the state of its population, progress of the arts and sciences . . . and above all the means in the power of the state. . . . Former efforts have failed owing to no revenues being set aside for the support of such institutions, and they were made to depend too much on the funds to be extracted directly from the people."⁴²

On September 27, 1815, the Richmond *Enquirer*, under the able editorship of Thomas Ritchie,⁴³ inaugurated a column on Internal Improvement, with a section devoted to "schools" which in this issue states:

"We bring the subject [schools] forward in this shape. We shall soon have occasion to retouch it and put it to the citizens of Richmond, Norfolk, etc., why they have so long suffered geniuses to wither or run wild in the streets!"

On December 5, 1815, Ritchie attempts to stir the legislature:

"What state is in more need of improvement? Now, Virginians, you must rouse, . . . open our rivers, clear the roads, establish schools, etc., . . . and the session [legislature] will be revered among the sons of men. . . . Who will flinch from his public duty to catch a phantom popularity?"

On December 14, 1815, an article, signed "An Enthusiast," recommends a standing legislative "committee on Seminaries of Learning" which might collect data and provide a fund for the improvement of schools. On January 13, 1816, it is said editorially:

"The proceedings of the Legislature begin to assume a most interesting aspect. The Report . . . on the Literary Fund attracts *our most anxious attention*. . . . We are ashamed of the apathy into which she [Virginia] has fallen."

On February 24, 1816, however, the future of public education seemed assured; for a solution to the vexing problem of augmenting the Literary Fund without recourse to local taxation or direct state appropriation was offered by Charles Fenton Mercer, then chairman of the House Committee on Finance. He proposed that the General Assembly deposit to the credit of the Literary Fund a refund from the United

⁴² *House Journal*, Dec. 6, 1816, Report of Literary Fund.

⁴³ Thomas Ritchie, "The Father of Virginia journalism" was editor of the Richmond *Enquirer*, 1804-45, and it may be truly said, represented the foremost influence for the spread of Republicanism during that period. Ritchie was a strong advocate of internal improvement and public schools. *Vide* Ambler, C. H., Thomas Ritchie.

States Government of about \$400,000; and that all future payments from the Federal Government of the loans made by Virginia, February 20, 1812, for the prosecution of the War of 1812,⁴⁴ be likewise added to the fund. The suggestion of the Finance Committee was cast into a bill. It passed the House without a division, and was sent up to the Senate and "returned two hours after with their concurrence."⁴⁵ The Literary Fund leaped from less than \$50,000 to \$450,000, with the assurance of becoming \$1,000,000 or more when all the Federal money should be paid. Thus for the first time the permanent state fund was large enough to justify the preparation of a plan for a state system of schools.

At the same time that Mr. Mercer proposed this disposition of Federal moneys he submitted a resolution⁴⁶ asking that the state digest a plan for "an University, Colleges, Academies and such Schools as shall diffuse the benefits of Education throughout the commonwealth." The resolution deplores the lethargy of the state, citing the free schools in actual operation in the states of New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, "where a free school is in every town, village, and hamlet for poor children," where "large sums of money are annually raised for their support, and where it is a peculiar subject of legislation . . . while our youth must go North. . . ."⁴⁷ The Carolinas have made much more progress on this subject than Virginia. Humiliating, indeed, but it should arouse us from our lethargy. Shall we remain tributary to other states?"⁴⁸

The augmented Literary Fund awoke new hope and great enthusiasm in the state. Interested friends of primary schools, academies, private and denominational colleges, and several factions of the university party, alike saw in this enactment a chance for state subsidy for their particular interest. The

⁴⁴ *House Journal*, 1816, 177. Charles F. Mercer, as chairman of House Committee on Finance, recommended "to lay the foundation of a comprehensive system of education . . . (with) the residue of the debt due the commonwealth from the U. S." At the same time his committee suggested a plan for "extinguishing the state debt to the banks of the state."

⁴⁵ Mercer, *op. cit.*, xviii.

⁴⁶ *House Journal*, 1816, 177.

⁴⁷ The author of the resolution is too optimistic; there was no such development in the *sparsely settled districts* of these states. "Crito" (Rev. Dr. Rice) writes that more than \$250,000 a year is spent on education of Virginia youth outside the state. Argument for University of Virginia, Richmond *Enquirer*, 1815.

⁴⁸ Mercer, *op. cit.*, xviii.

Enquirer voices the enthusiasm felt throughout the state and the approval accorded the legislature for its wise measure. On February 28, 1816, it records:

"The passage of the bill provides that the surplus of the debt due by the United States, etc., shall go into the chest of the Literary Fund. . . . And thus by one munificent donation a sum estimated by some at \$1,200,000 is to go to the benefit of Education and the improvement of the people! It is really delightful to wander through a scene of this description, every step you take presents you with some patriotic and high-minded achievement. VIRGINIA HAS AWAKENED . . . a spirit has gone forth which will make her happy, useful, and great!"

On March 2, 1816, appears an editorial by Thomas Ritchie, with the caption:

"Well done, good and faithful servants."

"A year ago we said and it was said of us that we were in a state of lethargy. This legislature, however, has provided: (1) a fund for roads and rivers, (2) a fund for schools and for internal improvement generally. Schools — nearly \$1,000,000 is given to this *holy* purpose, besides the \$50,000 of the Literary Fund. So great a spring has been given to the hopes of the friends of EDUCATION that the Executive have it in charge to lay a scheme before the next General Assembly of a University, Colleges, Academies and Schools to diffuse the benefits of Education among the people. This act alone ought to hand down this legislature to the gratitude of posterity."⁴⁹

On March 9, in the special column devoted to Internal Improvements, appears the following, signed by "A plain Farmer who knows little of politics."

"The only mortification I have ever felt as a Virginian has arisen from our inattention to the improvement of our country and the education of our children. The latter I consider as the basis of morals and of Republican government. . . . This reproach will cease, thanks to the wisdom of the last Assembly. After awarding first place to those who achieved our Revolution, I allot to the Members of the last Assembly the second. Their object was not to provide for the Education of the Rich or of the parents living in favored parts of the state, but to diffuse . . . free schools in every county, to extend those advantages to the offspring of the most indigent, etc."⁵⁰

Other states note this Act of 1816, as the following compliments from the New York *Columbian*, which was copied by the *Enquirer*,⁵¹ show:

COMPLIMENTS: LIBERAL POLICY OF VIRGINIA.

". . . The course which they [legislators] have traced is so patriotic and so pure, the good which they have projected so brilliant, . . . their motives

⁴⁹ Richmond *Enquirer*, March 2, 1816.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, March 9, 1816.

⁵¹ Copied with note by Thomas Ritchie in the *Enquirer*, March 23, 1816.

so much elevated above that gross and sordid atmosphere which deliberative assemblies so generally breathe, that it is hard to speak without laying ourselves open to the imputation of a romantic enthusiasm. Virginia has provided for internal improvements with a million dollars, another million for schools; maps and charts, the fine arts, armories, and arsenals are provided for, too. Well done, Virginia! You have no shallow politician, no crafty dissembler in power to exclaim, 'I'll have nothing to do with Jefferson's canal! — the opening of this road, or clearing that river.' All labored for the public good without reluctance and without equivocation. Admirable, Virginia! New York, we trust, will slumber no longer, but Samson-like snap the petty withes of party and prejudice which have bound her in a fatal apathy."

The legislature of 1815-16 adjourned with the prospect of making Virginia the first state in the Union to establish a modern democratic school system. Governor Nichols's message, November 11, 1816, is truly eloquent with hope:

"Next to those who planned to accomplish our Revolution the affection of their countrymen will rank those who contributed most to the establishment of a system of Public Education . . . who give the state the greatest command of talent, and the individual the best prospect of happiness. Genius is not the offspring of wealth alone . . . let it be cultivated at the public expense, make it a national property that it may be a national benefit."⁵²

The legislative session of 1817-18 was to become famous in educational annals. It was marked by much enthusiasm, but at the same time by a hopeless conflict of educational plans and principles. It closed with the university movement and the conservative principles of class education in the ascendent. Thomas Jefferson made the last great fight of his life through Joseph C. Cabell, leader of the Jeffersonian school party in the Senate; Charles Fenton Mercer of Loudoun County remained the brilliant advocate of popular common school education and the representative of western policies in the House of Delegates. That Cabell was primarily interested in beginning with the university as an object of state subsidy, is as plain as that Mercer, though interested in a state university, was with the popular cause of the lower schools, advocating state subsidy of the academies at least, if not the establishment of primary schools, before the university received its share. In 1817 Jefferson proposed to the legislature his scheme to create elementary schools "without taking one cent

⁵² *House Journal*, Nov. 11, 1816, Governor's Message.

of the Literary Fund.”⁵³ This time he would coerce the local communities into action by these measures:

- (1) make it necessary to read readily in some tongue, native or acquired, in order to qualify as a citizen.
- (2) remove the expense by making education free to all.
- (3) strengthen the purpose of the parent by disfranchisement of his child while *uneducated*.⁵⁴

His plan was to declare each county *ipso facto* divided into wards corresponding to the militia captaincies. At a full muster of each company the meaning of the law should be explained and the location and establishment of a school put to the popular vote of the ward. With this done, the people should meet, as they did to build roads, etc., and build a log schoolhouse, having already taken a roll of those children who would attend and could pay the small tuition. These latter would probably be able to support a common teacher, who would instruct gratis the few who otherwise would be deprived of school privileges. Should there be a deficiency, the ward, in common, might easily supplement it. *Great effort was made to convince the people of their ability to carry this small burden of tax.* Jefferson, it may be repeated, would leave the establishment and maintenance of schools to local management rather than to the governor and his council, “whom,” he said, “the people well might fear.”⁵⁵

It is interesting to note the reception of this proposal. It was regarded by some as a very good bill in “theory.” Cabell writes: “The Primary School Bill has been read with much admiration, but I fear great difficulties will arise out of the sparseness of the population of the country.”⁵⁶ He sug-

⁵³ *House Journal*, 1817; Randolph, *op. cit.*, 79. It is interesting to note the consistency of his decentralization policy and the practical motive behind this plan. He writes Cabell, Sept. 9, 1817: “If twelve or fifteen hundred schools are to be placed under one general administration, an attention so divided will amount to a dereliction of them to themselves. It is surely better, then, to place each school at once under the care of those most interested in its conduct. In this way the Literary Fund is left untouched to complete the whole system of education by establishing a college in every district of about eighty miles square for the second grade of education, to wit, language, ancient and modern; and for the third grade, a single University in which the sciences shall be taught in the highest degree.”

⁵⁴ Suggested, he says, by a similar provision he had read in a current proposed change in franchise in Spain — *vide* letters to Chevalier de Onis. Henderson: Jefferson on Public Education, 29.

⁵⁵ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 54, 55.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1816, 86.

gested that the bill be included in those then before the legislature calling for an university and colleges. To some critics, the clause demanding as a qualification for citizenship the ability to read — a present-day prerequisite to franchise in Virginia — appeared too rigorous.⁵⁷ But it was the principle of local taxation on property that the well-to-do eastern Virginian, anxious for higher schools, was reluctant to accept. This attitude is vouched for in a letter from Cabell to Jefferson.⁵⁸

“I have engaged in conferring with some of the ablest men in Richmond on the subject of your bills. There was but one opinion in regard to the propriety of having an university; a pretty general concurrence as to the expediency of colleges; . . . but a great contrariety as to the practicability and expediency of primary schools; and with respect to the mode of organizing them, if admitted to be practicable and expedient.”

As these letters are confidential messages their value is high as evidence of the true state of mind of both Jefferson and the “ablest men of Richmond,” as Mr. Cabell selected them. Mr. Jefferson in his reply to this letter states very positively that, in spite of his great desire to erect a state university, he would rather see an adequate scheme of primary schools in operation in the state;⁵⁹ and that it was for this reason he would teach the parents the meaning of public education by penalizing their sons till they were better equipped to participate in the affairs of a democracy.

Mercer and Jefferson, in hearty accord as to the fundamental necessity of popular education, differed radically concerning the method of achieving it.⁶⁰ As opposed to Jefferson’s insistent idea that the maintenance and conduct of schools be left entirely to local initiative, Mercer argued for state *support* to obviate the burden of local tax; and for some degree of state *control* and direction without which local apathy could never be overcome. He clearly set forth in his resolution praying for a digest of a public school system, that state subsidy would, if all the Literary Fund were devoted to common

⁵⁷ Randolph, *op. cit.*, Dec. 29, 1817, 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1818-20, 267. Jefferson states elsewhere (*vide* p. 86) that it is important to *begin* with the university, and, throughout the Cabell fight in the Senate, gives his assent to plans which favored this principle and obstructed legislation for the lower schools.

⁶⁰ As part of the Resolution, *Senate Journal*, Jan. 10, 1816, Mr. Mercer wished: (1) to begin with the establishment of primary schools; (2) he felt the most practicable method of creating such schools was through the state assumption of a portion of the expense and control. See p. 61 f. for Mr. Jefferson’s view.

schools, create a complete school system in fifty years, without the local tax called for in Jefferson's bills. Moreover, such state subsidy might be used as a reward for the more progressive counties and a stimulant to the conservative. In either case, experience, he felt, justified a strong motive for taxation for schools. His resolution also points out that if interest were allowed to accumulate until 1821, say, the Literary Fund principal would be \$1,019,535; \$83,841 could be counted upon as interest for 1821. Thereafter, \$70,000 should be appropriated from the interest for primary schools, the surplus (\$13,841) being added to the principal. In the first year \$70,000 would build a schoolhouse in each county (at a cost of \$600 each). In ten years, by 1830, there would be \$1,223,299 available for school purposes; and yet \$700,000 would have been spent in the education of not fewer than 50,000 poor youth of our state. In thirty years, by 1850, "we might have . . . two hundred free schools, and two colleges, entirely at public expense; with no cost to the local tax-payer *be he rich or poor.*" Finally, he thought that by 1866 — it was in 1869 that the post-bellum free school system was created — we might easily have "free schools in every hamlet."

Mr. Mercer has left us a clear statement of his position on the question of state school support.⁶¹ He advocated two means of taxation, direct and indirect. In his Princeton address, 1826, he cites Connecticut and the progress made in New York State as evidence that the diffusion of popular education is stimulated by a scheme of state aid, plus voluntary taxation, based upon rewards and bonuses, and fails if left entirely to local support and initiative. Massachusetts was an example he would not imitate — because she depended upon coercive taxation,⁶² the state penalizing only the incorporated towns which failed to tax themselves adequately for schools.⁶³ As he himself put it, he preferred the "principle of reward rather than punishment." He would have the state offer aid from the permanent fund only to such communities as would first tax themselves to get it. He felt that the "desire to participate in the benefits of the State Fund" would

⁶¹ Mercer, *op. cit.*, 71. *Vide* Mercer argument in *Senate Journal*, Feb. 24, 1816, 71.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 53, 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 53, "From 1647 on, there were numerous complaints in the Massachusetts legislature because the towns failed to tax themselves for public education."

be adequate incentive to communities to exercise this unusually odious duty of self-taxation.⁶⁴ He was appealed to by "the economy of administration of the northern systems." This economy he found (1) in the distribution and permanency of their schoolhouses; (2) in the low cost of teachers as compared to the waste entailed in the fee school; (3) in the equal and general diffusion of opportunity and in the improvement in the quality of class-room instruction.

Subsequent development in this state has seemed to justify Mercer's claim that people left to tax themselves move slowly toward good schools. In January, 1818, Cabell writes Jefferson that there is a fear that "neither the people nor their representatives" would agree to a plan of assessment in the proposed wards for the expense of local schools.⁶⁵ Cabell was, perhaps, clearer on this point than his mentor. However, Jefferson demands consistently, "What expense! except building a log house which would employ the labourers of the ward three days in twenty years; . . . for food two days' subsistence per family a year . . . and \$150 a year in cash for the whole ward." He proceeds then to show that such a system would cost less than the sporadic "English elementary schools," found here and there in the state. With forty children between the ages of nine and twelve, in each militia district of about five hundred people, the cost per pupil would be \$2.28 (\$150 divided by 67, the number of families) and all children would be educated without the brand of pauperism. Under the system of private schools then in vogue the teachers, he tells us, charged from \$20 to \$30 per child (formerly it had been only 20 to 30 shillings). On the same basis, if all children were in school under the existing system, the cost of each school would be \$1000, instead of \$150 and maintenance of the teacher; or \$15 a year per family instead of \$2.28. This meant a gross cost to the state of \$1,200,000 per year under the old system,

⁶⁴ Mercer, *op. cit.*, "Contrast New York and Virginia. New York puts her fund, founded in 1812, in operation in 1816. In that year New York, with but \$50,000 plus local taxation, educated 140,000 children, and by 1826 owned 8000 school-houses, etc. In 1826, 435,350 children were in school. In 1826 Connecticut, with \$72,000, cared for all her youth, 85,000, at a cost of two dollars per child (which exceeded the ratio of New York). Virginia created her fund in 1810 and applied it in 1818. In 1826 the annual cost per child was nine dollars and only 10,000—a moiety of the total number in need—were enrolled as indigent." This, of course, did not include the pay pupils in the various schools not under state bounty.

⁶⁵ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 94, 102.

in contrast with \$180,000 under the proposed system,—a difference of more than \$1,000,000 annually which might be saved the state. Moreover, in the new system a man would be taxed—here the planter and smallest farmer shrank alike at the word, no doubt—according to his holdings, and yet all would receive benefit of the tax; i.e., the poor would receive education, the rich improved conditions through a more enlightened electorate and neighborhood.⁶⁶

We have interrupted the story of the fortunes of the augmented Literary Fund, 1815-18, to give in some detail the fundamental differences in the positions of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Mercer. It is, perhaps, not an unfair generalization to say that Mr. Jefferson cherished a theory, the dream of a social state, the perfecting of which depended upon the method of administering public education quite as much as upon the fact of its creation. Apparently Mr. Mercer, with those Virginians who shared his views, with equal faith in democracy, offered a practical program to meet immediate conditions. He was intent upon forcibly carrying the schools to the people, if necessary, and he was willing to trust the management of the schools to representatives of the people.

Lacking the training in the history of township self-government and holding the traditions of apprenticeship education, neither the rich nor the poor of Virginia were likely to go far out of their way or deep into their pockets to systematize the scattered, expensive, and inefficient private English or elementary school system. In truth, no such local initiative had developed in the Northern states, cited so often by Virginians as examples to follow. In New York and Connecticut, where efficient state public school systems were being organized, centralization of state authority and state subsidy was necessary to enkindle enthusiasm for local taxation and for education.⁶⁷ Where too much was left to the community and the state assumed only a coercive policy, as in Massachusetts, we have the school conditions that aroused James G. Carter and Horace Mann to efforts that have become known as "The Common School Revival."

⁶⁶ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 105.

⁶⁷ Mercer, *op. cit.*, 51 *et seq.*, able criticism of American state school fund administration in 1826.

CHAPTER V

EFFORTS TO CREATE A STATE FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM, 1815-18, ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE LITERARY FUND. A SYSTEM OF STATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR SUBSTITUTED BY THE ACT OF 1818

THE creation of the \$1,000,000 Literary Fund for the avowed purposes of Public Education and the general enthusiasm for internal improvement gave new heart to the progressive element in the state. A new chapter in the evolution of the state may, indeed, be said to have begun. The characteristic pessimism of the period was lifted. The West, and the newspapers friendly to internal improvement, hailed the activity of the legislature of 1815-16 as evidence of a new era; for a permanent fund for Public Works had been created at about the same time the Literary Fund was augmented.¹

Three great questions confronted the state: (1) How should the Literary Fund be administered and how augmented to create a *threefold* system of schools without resorting to local taxation, which the majority agreed was odious and impracticable? (2) Should the fund, if augmented by local supplement or additional state appropriation, go to the fulfillment of the Acts of 1810, 1811, 1812, or to a new system open and free to all, rich and poor alike? (3) Should state aid go first to the creation of new academies and to the existing struggling private ones, or should stress be placed upon a great university to promulgate the arts and sciences, or should primary education be first cared for out of the new fund? In all three questions there lay the demand of the democrat for new educational facilities and ran the fear of the conservative that great danger

¹ The Board of Public Works, with a permanent endowment of over \$1,000,000 was organized Feb. 15, 1816. Unlike the Literary Fund Board, there were directors from each of the four natural geographical divisions of the state that "just and equitable distribution and application of the fund for every section of the commonwealth" might be secured. C. F. Mercer, W. L. Lewis, and Thomas Jefferson represented the section from "Blue Ridge to Tidewater." Such a distribution of the Literary Fund Board had been urged.

lay in "change in the principle of education," that is, in a change from the scheme sanctioned by colonial policy and property interests, to that of state-supported common schools for all.

In the search for a solution of these puzzling problems, the Mercer and Jefferson factions, reflecting fundamental national party attitudes, had more to fear in each other than in the old-fashioned gentleman who wanted no change but desired no fight. The conservative was in reality in the minority, and had the two factions agreed upon a practical plan of state school administration, there can be no doubt that Virginia would have distinguished herself among the commonwealths. This will be evident in the brilliant but disappointing struggle in the legislatures of 1815 and 1817, culminating in the distribution of the Literary Fund revenue by the act of February 21, 1818.

This struggle began with a serious effort on the part of state officials to establish a state system based on the best experience of the time. On May 30, 1815 Governor W. C. Nichols, as president of the Literary Fund Board and by vote of the General Assembly, had addressed a letter to a number of distinguished gentlemen asking for practical suggestions. Replies were received from James Monroe, then Secretary of State of the United States, Thomas Cooper of Carlyle College, President J. A. Smith of William and Mary, President Timothy Dwight of Yale, and Dr. Samuel F. Mitchell of New York. Dr. Mitchell submitted a comprehensive "outline of a system of Public Education." Dr. Smith advocated the "education of teachers at the expense of the state and a vigilant system of superintendence," as essentials to the new scheme. Replies from these gentlemen, supplemented by suggestions from several state leaders, became the basis of the Plan for a General System of Education ordered by the General Assembly and presented on December 10, 1816, as part of the Report and Digest of the President and Directors of the Literary Fund. This report shows that former efforts for schools failed because "no revenue was set aside; schools were made to depend on funds to be extracted directly from the people. . . . The [proposed] system adopts means not burdensome to the community. . . . A happy feature is that vice and immortality are made to pay involuntary tribute to

virtue and to provide means of their own extinction.”² On the day the Digest was presented the Richmond *Enquirer* printed it in full, with the following comment under the caption EDUCATION:

“We submit the report³ with great pleasure. Without education we cannot preserve our liberty. The people must know their rights to make their officers respect them. This is too clear to require proof, the only question is HOW are GOOD SCHOOLS to be established . . . we are not sure how far government ought to proceed in providing everything — for higher schools particularly. Surely there is no subject so well entitled to the consideration of a free People.”

Mr. Mercer led in a plan to increase the Literary Fund sufficiently to meet all the needs of a general system at once. This the Committee of Schools and Colleges of the House proposed to do by a system of State Literary Fund Banks, the bonus or profit of which was to go to the Literary Fund. The bill provided for twenty-three banks, with a total capital of \$7,296,000, \$2,200,000 from the Literary Fund and \$5,000,000 in stock to be issued to private individuals.

This plan was assailed by the Republicans⁴ as “a paper system.” Mr. Blackburn⁵ thought the Literary Fund — “the last hope of the country” — ought not to be connected with “these usurious, gambling institutions.” He asked the Assembly what would be thought of its incorporating “a gambling house or houses of ill-fame in every county on condition of their paying a bonus to the use of the Literary Fund.” There were many newspaper attacks upon the proposed system, arising chiefly, no doubt, from the fevered attitude toward the national bank question which had for some time troubled Congress. Tazewell, Colston, and Mercer vigorously supported the bill. The latter pointed out that the hope of school success depended upon increasing the Literary Fund. It would be impossible, he said, to carry into execution the great objects which he hoped for, viz., one university, four colleges, twenty-five academies and primary schools established over the state, aid for William and Mary and existing academies, without, at least, \$700,000 more than the Literary Fund offered as it stood. He “pressed most earnestly its adoption,” ob-

² Cf. Mercer's (p. 60) and Jefferson's plan (p. 58) supporting primary schools!

³ *House Journal*, Feb. 24, 1816, Report of Literary Fund Board.

⁴ *Alexandria Herald*, Jan. 10, 1817.

⁵ *Ibid.*

serving that he knew of "several liberal-minded and patriotic individuals in this city [Richmond] who will aid the bank and one who will give \$5000 to help endow the institution. In less than four years there would be \$2,000,000 free of debt which might be employed to cover the state with primary schools. . . . Unless the Banks are established or the real estate — held by the Literary Fund Board — sold, there can be no appropriation for schools. It is better to invest the money in bank stock and expect to clear 8% or 9%." The *Virginia Herald* recording the debate in the Assembly, reports:

"If this matter were not adopted he [Mercer] would take it for granted that the Legislature was willing to defer till a later period the execution of the great system devised for the Literary Fund. . . . He was in favor of \$100,000 every year for the immediate establishment of schools, an object peculiarly dear to his heart . . . and conjured the House to look at the state of our schools and compare them with those of Scotland, France, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New York, whose schools ought to put a Virginian to the blush. . . . He invoked the House on behalf of the orphan and the poor."⁶

The Literary Fund Bank Bill passed the House, January 7, 1817, by an overwhelming vote of 80 yeas and 8 noes, but was killed in the Senate by a small margin of those who favored the university movement. The new school system must needs be established with the interest on \$1,000,000 or not at all.

On January 11, Mr. Garnett offered an amendment to the "Digest of the Literary Fund Board" proposing a Board of Public Instruction to supplement the duties of the board in the investment and disbursement of the fund.⁷ A substitute⁸ for the digest and the several bills reported by the school committee, and still before the House, was proposed on February 15, by Mercer. Two articles of this General Education Bill sealed its fate as far as both Cabell and the conservative wing of the Senate were concerned; i.e., the proposed western site of the state university and the large concessions to the

⁶ Fredericksburg, *Virginia Herald*, Jan. 1, 1817, on Report of Proceedings of General Assembly.

⁷ West Virginia has such an independent Board, see footnote p. 51.

⁸ This substitute is printed with the pamphlet "Sundry Documents on the Subject of a System of Public Education," referred to in the preceding paragraph. On reading it, Jefferson said, under date of Oct. 24, 1817, to Cabell, "A serious perusal of the bill convinces me that unless something less extravagant could be devised the whole undertaking must fail. The primary schools, alone, on that plan would exhaust the whole fund; the colleges as much more and an university would never come into question." His "plan for a system of Primary Schools without aid from the Fund" is a result of this letter.

demands of the Western members of the House of Delegates who had voted for the Literary Fund Banks. Cabell and Jefferson were now actively pressing the claims of Central College near Monticello as the site of the new university. Mercer had agreed "at the last moment," as he phrased it years later, to stipulate in his bill that the university be located in the Shenandoah Valley, "not more than three miles from the great Valley road leading from Winchester to Abingdon." The bill provided:

- (1) A State "Board of Public Instruction" of ten members; "*only two of whom shall be elected from Tidewater*" or Eastern Virginia, the rest to represent the other three divisions of the state.⁹
- (2) This board shall regard *the primary school as its foundation*, no money to be given the higher schools "*while the primary schools are unprovided for.*"
- (3) The state shall be divided into townships and trustees elected by the county courts.
- (4) The Literary Fund directors shall give \$200 for a teacher and \$10 for books to every township which has provided a lot of two acres to the value of \$200 and a house thereon to the value of \$250, and has conveyed the same to the president and directors of the Literary Fund, elected a teacher, etc.
- (5) "All free, white children . . . shall be entitled to free tuition," but the trustees may demand tuition from "such parents and guardians as are able to pay without inconvenience."
- (6) Nothing shall be given to the academies from the Literary Fund unless such quota shall be supplemented by them.
- (7) Three new colleges, Pendleton, Wythe, and Henry, shall be located beyond Tidewater [two in the present state of West Virginia and one in Northern Piedmont].
- (8) Support to three denominational colleges, two in the East and one in the lower Valley [William and Mary, Hampden-Sidney and Washington are embraced in the system to be created by this act].

⁹ Cf. organization of Board of Public Works, footnote, p. 63.

- (9) The president and directors of the Literary Fund shall continue to be guardians of that fund, but the new board shall take over the management of the new system.

The Mercer substitute was enthusiastically supported by the West and passed the House, but was defeated in the Senate February 20, by a tie vote — seven to seven — after Cabell had endeavored to amend it in favor of the Charlottesville site for the university.¹⁰ On the following day Mr. Taylor, a Jefferson agent in the House, moved that three thousand copies of the chief documents and proposals for popular education heretofore presented be printed for the use of the General Assembly and be spread throughout the state. A pamphlet was published subsequently by the president and directors of the Literary Fund containing:

- (1) Jefferson's Bill for the more General Diffusion of Knowledge, 1779.
- (2) Jefferson's letter of 1814 to Peter Carr on the subject of Education.
- (3) The report of the president and directors of the Literary Fund to the legislature of 1816-17.
- (4) Mercer's General Education Bill providing for the Establishment of Primary Schools, Academies, Colleges and University (which passed the House, but was rejected by the Senate, February 20, 1817).
- (5) Suggestions made by the Senate in rejecting the latter bill.

Thus, a long and laborious session of the legislature was compelled to adjourn without having adopted a plan. No faction was pleased and the future of both the proposed university and common schools was in doubt. Mr. Ritchie, of the *Enquirer*, sums up the work of the legislators: "Let the truth be told. They spent much time in doing very little good. . . . They have attempted to do many things which finally ended in smoke." He divides their work into "good

¹⁰ The Virginia Senate contained twenty-four seats, twenty of which represented Tidewater and Piedmont; four, that part west of the Alleghanies. This made it possible in the Senate to negate the acts of the more popular branch of the Assembly. It gave rise to epithets of "Eastern Don," "black" or "negro" Senate hurled at that body by the West in their contest for a revision of the State Constitution.

acts, injudicious acts, and abortions." The chief abortion of the House was the attempt to create Literary Fund Banks, which he considered discredited real efforts to establish schools. He praises the defeat of the Booker motion to use the Literary Fund for state debt;¹¹ "so may it fare with every similar attempt to annihilate or abridge the legitimate power of this sacred fund." He is pleased that the "Bill for Primary Schools, Colleges and an University was defeated, as it was of doubtful value to the cause."¹²

The *Enquirer*, during the sitting of the 1816-17 legislature, is filled with articles on educational agitation as it was heard in the Senate and stimulated in the state by these debates. The editor gave a permanent column to the topic. Mr. Cabell wrote under the pen name "A Friend of Science," in support of the university. Mr. Jefferson's own plans found their way into its columns through Mr. Cabell, as their correspondence indicates. On February 18, 1817, appears a letter on "Public Education" which attacks the General Education Bill at several points, particularly the provision for a State Board of Public Instruction.

"The Bill assumes that government ought to take the business of education into its own hands, not only for primary schools for the poor . . . but for all classes. Is it very clear that government ought to do this? Have the practical effects been beneficial elsewhere? The Bill settles this with a dash of the pen, but the writer believes that there are doubts and difficulties in this great question which ought for the present deter the legislature from meddling with it. . . . Great *European institutions of state support* are always the *last retreat of error*.¹³ . . . Great men of Europe have been produced by the *tutorial scheme* wherein *individuality* is developed."

The author of this letter ends his argument by calling the proposed Board of Public Instruction a "college of cardinals — a political monster of an *imperium in imperio*." He reveals himself as a conservative churchman in his fear that the literature of the whole country will be subjected to this Board; "and it may by degrees, which the public eye surely discerns,

¹¹ Mr. Booker, of Prince Edward, moved to dissolve the Literary Fund and return the money to the state treasury for the payment of state debt, "thus reducing state taxes 20 per cent." This motion was vigorously opposed by Mr. Scott and Mr. Mercer, and decisively voted down by the House. *Vide House Journal* for Feb. 14, 1817; *Richmond Enquirer*, Feb. 15, 1817; *Virginia Herald*, Feb. 19, 1817.

¹² Mr. Ritchie has reference to Mr. Mercer's amendment. He may betray his idea here in the word "cause" — his insistence that the academies should receive the first bounty of the state.

¹³ Cites Adam Smith as authority.

train opinion to its own purposes — to the hurt I might add of true religion. The Friends of Education must prove themselves."

The most striking and complete evidence of the spirit and philosophies that dominated the troubled legislature of 1816-17 lies in the controversy published in the *Enquirer* between two correspondents: "*A Constituent who Doubts concerning the Merits of the Proposed System of Public Education*" and a writer signing himself "Virginian" who presents a "*Vindication of the Proposed System from the Doubts of a Constituent*."¹⁴ The former contributes nine articles and a supplement; the latter, a series of six replies. An analysis of these opposing views will lay bare the chief cause of difference in the legislature and of the failure to provide state legislation for the middle class. "A Constituent" uses for all his articles the one text:

"But in this [Virginia] government though man might be happy he will not always, nor indeed ever, be satisfied. He will reach at perfection absolute and unqualified. He forgets that *theoretical* perfection in government and practical oppression are closely allied. He will be *more* than man and become less."

The writer protests against the proposed change in the *principle* of education from private initiative to compulsion by the state. "Some of the private rights of education are to be converted into public rights." And he sees "in the trustees of the new primary system, fifty-four at least and perhaps not less than two thousand complete demi-corporations with powers in perpetuity the most delicate, indefinite and irresponsible." To this "Virginian" answers that these trustees elected annually would have no power beyond the selecting and removing of teachers.

"A Constituent" sees a danger that three years' schooling will disturb the social *status quo* by throwing the mechanical arts into the hands of the slaves, i.e., the effect of education will be to diminish the disposition for labor and skill and to encourage sloth and idleness! Again, he considers the new plan inferior to the Poor Law, which *provides sustenance for the whole life of the child*, while the new system aims to provide instruction for only a brief period.¹⁵ Third, he fears the

¹⁴ It is difficult to determine the real authors of these letters.

¹⁵ Best statement of the conservative view. "Vindication" admits in his reply that he thinks every boy should pay something, as they do in Scotland, i.e., education "should be cheap but not gratuitous." This is Mercer's view also.

proposed State Board of Public Instruction as "an engine of power that will be wielded against the people finally."

The answer of "Virginian" is interesting, for he points out that the board of the Literary Fund has proved inadequate to administer a system of education, while the county courts are improper agents for this purpose because: (1) of the largeness of their territory and (2) the permanence in tenure of office and consequent apathy, differences in individualities, changes in the courts, and (3) the fact that the courts have already been tried and found wanting as agents for the promotion of schools.¹⁶ To "A Constituent's" final objection that Virginia is trying to copy European countries, particularly England, "Virginian" retorts:

"Her [England's] object is to preserve her monarchical form of government. The exclusive education of the rich is her mode. Our object is to preserve our Republican form and our mode should be the *education of the whole*. Unfortunately . . . in Virginia, hunters of popularity cry, 'innovation! theory! philosophy! tax!' no sooner than any plan of public improvement is stated by friends of philanthropy."¹⁷

"A Constituent" submits, finally, his counter-project to all bills pending in the General Assembly. This project, to establish a university near Charlottesville and put the rest of the Literary Fund into academies, new colleges and the existing colleges, excludes all provision for primary schools. The attempt to provide for these schools he considers was responsible for all the difficulties in making *proper* application of the Literary Fund. He gives as reasons for advocating this plan.

"(1) It is simple and practicable; (2) It violates no *private right* nor assumes the discharge of any private duty; (3) It is the discharge of an appropriate government function. . . . *It is the duty of the government to supply only that which the citizens cannot provide in a private capacity . . . it is an unnatural principle to compel one man to contribute to the education of another's child!*" (4) The commonwealth does not *need* primary schools, but is greatly in need of the higher and more profound knowledge of the sciences, for only one-half of those engaged in the professions and public service in Virginia are qualified by education."

A resolution in keeping with the sentiments of "A Constituent" just quoted was presented by the Committee of

¹⁶ Act of Dec. 22, 1796. "How many of the Magistrates now (1818) of the County Courts even know of the law of 1796 on this subject?" It was, of course, still a statute, but "Vindication" doubts that any know of it.

¹⁷ Another current and frequently given argument against "change in principle of education."

Schools and Colleges at the same time that the General Education Bill was before the House. This resolution inquired into the expediency of enacting a general law governing all funds of whatever character now in the hands of the overseers of the poor of the various counties, and pledging such funds to the endowment of *schools*, the "said schools to be established in the counties where such funds may be, and the overseers of the poor to hold the same as trustees for that purpose." This resolution may be regarded as a forecast of the Act of 1818, which gave the greater portion of the Literary Fund for the education of the poor.

The tendency to maintain distinctions in the education of the rich and poor, the fear that change in education would involve danger in civil government, and the dread of tax are, as we have seen, characteristic of the literature of protest against free schools. The reactionary spirit in Virginia was supplemented and made formidable by a multitude of sectional and denominational interests. It was not so simple a matter as the clash of an aristocratic Tidewater with the democratic populace of the West. Political partisanship was pronounced and was behind the less fundamental differences that obscured the question of common schools. The correspondence of Jefferson and Cabell, 1815-26, is full of the ways and means of obviating petty movements that threaten the "cause."

As soon as the idea of a new state university had been popularized sufficiently to justify the legislature in calling for a plan, at least four parties made effort to secure the designation of it for their locality.¹⁸ William and Mary in the east and Washington College at Lexington in the southwest claimed it; for over twenty years Jefferson had nourished an establishment near Charlottesville for this purpose, only to have Staunton, with strong western support and good argument, contest his claim. More than this, the western counties, in clamoring for a convention to remedy the inequality of representation, seriously obstructed legislation for other purposes.¹⁹ A movement arose to remove the state capital from Richmond to Staunton or to some point in the west.²⁰ Another party advocated a rehabilitation of the College of William and Mary

¹⁸ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 433, 117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* *Vide* footnote, 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1818, 109, 117.

by removing it to Richmond and remodeling it. Arguments were rife on the relative desirability of Richmond and Norfolk as centers for a state medical school, which Jefferson had planned as one department of the new university at Charlottesville. Advocates of a state subsidized primary school system continued their fight; others would have the academies receive the first attention of the state. Trading of votes among the delegates, and clever manipulation of sectional and religious prejudices to sway popular opinion, were dominant in the legislature that opened in December, 1817.²¹

Early in the session, Samuel Taylor, a delegate in the House from Chesterfield County, reintroduced Jefferson's plan for a general system of education. It was, as Mr. Cabell says, "heartily supported by a group in both houses." A Primary School Bill appeared in apparent opposition to Jefferson's plan. This bill had been the order of the day in previous legislatures but was each day put off "till to-morrow" and never voted on. Cabell, in the interests of the university, made an effort to harmonize the differences of his and the primary school party proposals in the House, but failed. He writes Jefferson, "If I had the coöperation of four or five men, every thing could be effected" and suggests, as he had formerly done, a movement to send the "right men" to the House the following session.²² He reports a "dreary prospect," and opposition from "back country members."²³

Advantage of these differences was taken by Mr. Hill, of King and Queen County, who on February 11 brought in a substitute for all school bills pending.²⁴ This substitute was not a compromise. Without mentioning the higher schools at all, it delegated the Literary Fund revenue to the care of certain local officers or commissioners who would replace the Overseers of the Poor — who in turn had replaced the Colonial Church vestry — in providing a plan for the elementary education of poor children of each county. The day following the introduction of this substitute, the editor of the *Enquirer*, disgusted with this policy in contrast with the larger purposes of Jefferson's bills, says:

²¹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 6, 13, 1818, 177, 123.

²⁴ *House Journal*, Feb. 11, 1818.

²² *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 23, Feb. 6, 1818, 100, 111, 123.

²³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 23, 1818, 111.

"The House committee on schools adopts a substitute [Feb. 11] brought in by Mr. Hill of King and Queen for all other bills. The substitute does not mention academies, colleges, or an university, but appropriates the greater part of the revenue of the Literary Fund to commissioners who are to establish schools for poor children in each county to be taught the three R's. . . . Does not the solid interest of this state strongly protest against the application of the whole Literary Fund to the object of the proposed bill? We want academies. We want schools for teaching the higher branches, we want men who can do more than read, write and cipher. We want light to save this beloved land from the gloom of ignorance and degeneracy . . . let us assist the poor, but *let us do more*, let us assist the genius of our countrymen."²⁵

The reactionary effort to appropriate a small sum for the education of the poor and devote the rest to the payment of state debts was renewed. Mr. Hill's substitute, however, passed the House, and in the Senate, as Mr. Cabell says, "we engrafted upon it a provision for an University and it passed 15 to 3."²⁶ On February 21, 1818, this substitute, an "Act Appropriating Part of the Revenue of the Literary Fund and for Other Purposes,"²⁷ became a law. By it \$15,000 was allowed annually for the support of the university (and subsequently \$230,000 by appropriation from state revenue), while \$45,000 annually was given to the education of poor children.²⁸

Under this statute the new schools were to be governed by fifteen school commissioners in each county, appointed by the courts and constituting a corporate body for the management of the local quota of the Literary Fund, a sort of county or city school board but with very indefinite responsibilities compared to the Massachusetts' School Committee. The entire forty-five thousand dollars — deducting less than fifteen hundred dollars for expense of distributing it — was to be divided on *demand* among the counties and cities of the state. The money, funds, debts due them, and all other property held up to that time by the overseers of the poor and derived from the sale and forfeiture of the glebe lands, was assumed by the new commissioners for educational purposes. Only children of indigent parents were to benefit from the fund

²⁵ Richmond *Enquirer*, Feb. 12, 1818.

²⁷ *House Journal*, Feb. 21, 1818.

²⁶ Randolph, Feb. 20, 1818, 125.

²⁸ In 1826 C. F. Mercer says of this: "The erection of the University of Virginia has been executed at such a cost to the Literary Fund . . . as to impair its ability to sustain a system of primary schools coextensive with the territory and wants of the commonwealth." *Popular Education*, appendix, xviii.

and only such of these as the quota would support. The laws governing apprenticeship, colonial Virginia's chief provision for public education, continued in force. Masters were not relieved of the duty of education or of sending their apprentices to school at their own expense. The advance involved in the new law lay in providing public education beyond the apprenticeship and beyond the local legislation for the poor.

Thus the new era, prophesied in 1816, was not realized. A state free school system for all classes was not created, there had been no "change in principle" of administration, nor was public taxation for education accepted. Nevertheless, a second step may be said to have been taken in the evolution of public education. The state had assumed in principle the control of those schools and pupils accepting the provisions of the new act. Virginia had launched a quasi-system of primary free schools. The future of the common schools in the state must rest upon an evolution of this law.

CHAPTER VI

THE OPERATION OF THE LITERARY FUND PRIMARY SCHOOLS — THEIR LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTH. THE DIVORCE OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY PARTIES

THE Act of 1818 was typical of a *laissez-faire* policy. The state assumed a minimum of local control, merely paying over on demand the quotas due the counties. No state regulations were provided regarding schoolhouses, teachers, or pupils, nor was there any definite provision for a strict auditing of accounts.¹ No form of supervision was mentioned nor was the teacher's qualification measured by even so much as provision for periodic examination of state pupils. The law depended for efficiency on the disinterested service of public-spirited commissioners whose ideas must necessarily be bound by customary practices. Unlike the New England school committeemen these commissioners were wholly unpracticed in matters of this kind except as dispensers of charity funds.

The law's great simplicity and ease of execution was given as its chief virtue. The system would require no time of anybody. After its inauguration the school commissioners would need to meet only once a year, in October, to audit the teachers' bills and treasurers' school accounts and make up the report to the president and directors of the Literary Fund. As such trustees could serve their districts a number of years, it was argued, they would soon know the number of children entitled to state aid. "The rest of his business will be chiefly transacted by the people of the district themselves . . . whenever any particular neighborhood wishes to make a school, as it is termed, and a teacher offers in whom they can confide, their first effort is by carrying around a subscription paper to ascertain the number of scholars that will be subscribed by those who are able to pay."² Then the people might present

¹ Judge Spencer Roane of Essex County in a letter to the House, April 16, 1820, writes: "It is evident from inspecting the Act of 1818 that many law-suits and controversies may arise out of it."

² *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, "School Commissioner," VIII, 368-70.

this list and petition the local school commissioner to supplement the deficit by adding the names of as many poor children as the quota permitted. Four cents a day was allowed for each such child, but the bounty did not extend to the academies or secondary schools.

At a glance this would seem to be substantially a "rate-bill," the scheme of fixing rates employed in the Northern states. In practice, this state appropriation was regarded generally as a "donation to the poor." Participation in the fund required a formal declaration of poverty. The commissioner, locally accepted as a dispenser of gifts, was a judicial rather than an executive officer. The law obviously placed a premium on pauperism by oversimplifying matters. It was to operate of itself. A "Friend of Learning," writing in a magazine of the period, says:

"As soon as I saw that the inventors and friends of this system intended to make *light work* of it, that the Primary School System was to be a labor saving machine. . . . I despaired of its success . . . the education of the undisciplined children of the ignorant poor . . . to keep them at school, to awaken a desire of learning and to arouse to vigorous intellectual exertion, requires a patient and skilful attention and demands a care the law has adopted no means to secure."³

This writer pleads that, with a large class of society having no desire for "literary" education, indifferent or even hostile to the attempts to send them to school under any such principle of the old order, sympathetic leadership of the people and intelligent superintendence of teachers and methods pursued should be provided by the state.

With all its shortcomings the Primary School System was inaugurated. If later it was "laughed at on the floor of the General Assembly," it was at first taken seriously. Joseph C. Cabell, though he later took advantage of its weakness and temporary unpopularity to further the interest of the university party, was, perhaps, the first to help interpret the law and safeguard its application, at least to give it a fair trial in practice. On the passage of the bill he immediately offered his services as clerk to the Nelson County commissioners, and, in a series of board meetings in 1818-19, placed the system in that county on as firm a basis as the law allowed. Notably, a definition of "poor child" was formulated as "an unmarried

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 543 *et seq.*

person from seven to twenty-one whose parents by reason [of a lack] of property, labor or skill are not able to defray the expense of his education.”⁴ Mr. Ritchie, of the *Enquirer*, in printing the Nelson County report, calls it “a model of accurate accounting.” No doubt these timely forms and accounts did much to bring order and interest out of chaos and indifference.

Editor Ritchie, in the same article, headed “Primary Schools,” draws attention to the grave necessity of safeguarding the disbursement of “our charitable funds,” citing the efforts of the English Parliament the previous year to correct the abuses in the administration of their charity laws. Not desirous of accusing the new commissioners of fraud, he did wish the “private gifts [for the education of the poor] might be investigated. . . . It was the idea of waste that induced us to wish that the experiment of Primary Schools could at first be made upon a small scale.”⁵

Governor James P. Preston comments on the new law and the condition of education in the state with much hope. On December 8, 1818, he states that “some reports have been received from limited experiments of school commissioners. They are encouraging and should inspire unanimity and produce a liberal policy. . . . An unusual desire among citizens generally for the attainment of knowledge is now manifesting itself. The state of Virginia may soon acquire a distinguished reputation for learning . . . if encouraged and cherished . . . by the government.”⁶

The Report of the Literary Fund itself, December 22, 1818, states that the previous legislature had laid the foundation of two of the essential parts of public instruction and that the fund would in future be large enough to help the primary and intermediate schools. Norfolk Borough, Albemarle, Northumberland, and Hanover Counties are reported as having received and applied their quota: “Not enough money to

⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, June 22, 1818.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 27, 1818. In the earlier article (Feb. 28, 1818) Mr. Ritchie says: “The most important Act of the whole session is the School Bill, a measure which takes \$45,000 out of the \$70,000 of the Literary Fund for an experiment on the mode of educating the children of the Poor. We think the *experiment* begins on too large a scale and puts too much of this consecrated fund to the hazard of being wasted. We are afraid two or three years will verify this prediction. \$15,000 to the University we hail with delight . . . it will benefit the poor as well as the rich for many will go there who would go abroad or North.”

⁶ *House Journal*, Dec. 8, 1818.

reach all, but thousands will be benefited by the Fund who would grope out their lives in darkness." The report begs for better governance of lotteries as a possible means of revenue.

On December 6, 1819, Governor Preston urged that the Literary Fund be put in the hands of those who could give it more than secondary attention. He was apparently not conscious of the limitations of the local commissioners as supervisors of teaching: he had reference entirely to the business management, — the necessity of a scheme for raising additional school revenue without state appropriation or local taxation! In reference to the Act of 1818, the Governor said:

"Measures have been wisely commenced by means of the fund for enticing the whole mass of our community in the rudiments of learning, enabling all who choose to acquire a complete education, etc. . . . But it will depend upon the future legislature to mature and complete the undertaking."

A resolution abolishing the Boards of School Commissioners and placing the funds for primary schools under the direction of the overseers of the poor, and, it might be added, "permitting *females* as well as males to participate in the benefit of that Fund," was defeated in the House of Delegates on December 29, 1819.⁷

A strong repugnance against the new act arose among the poorer classes, while the great middle class was practically excluded from participation in the appropriation. There were many parents just able to feed and clothe their children, but unable to send them to the private schools of the neighborhood or to pay their board in a neighboring community when there were no schools at home. Not coming under the Act these families were deprived of state aid. Governor Thomas N. Randolph, in his message to the General Assembly in 1820, comments on the exclusion of this class:

"The annuity granted is greatly insufficient for the general establishment of schools to which parents in slender circumstances might have the opportunity of sending their children with the certainty of their returning at night. There are many parents who are unable to pay for their children's education — these should be extended the privilege."⁸

Those who were not of necessity "poor" had voluntarily to place themselves in that social category if they would profit

⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1820, 7.

by the state provision. Governor Randolph, depicting the difficulties of the uncompensated school commissioners in administrating the new system, emphasizes the great cause for popular reaction against it:

"To select fit objects of that charity as it is now dispensed an inquiry must necessarily be instituted which has not infrequently proved highly offensive to small cultivators who feel a just pride of independence for the certainty of being able to furnish abundant food and raiment although wholly unable to provide for the education of their children. Many of them feel unwilling to have their names placed in the list of paupers even for that important advantage. The task of the commissioners is rendered disagreeable by that circumstance as well as by the loss of time and fatigue incurred in the discharge of their duties. [The Governor sees that the gratuitous contribution of time and industry required for the application of the funds according to the plan proposed is far out of proportion to any benefits which can be conferred by the small sums allotted:] Nevertheless it is hoped that a bounty so generously provided will not be hastily withdrawn. Perhaps, a more simple plan might be devised which . . . would not require so much gratuitous labor which is not likely to be long cheerfully bestowed."⁹

Governor Randolph's recommendation that the middle class should be allowed to share in the fund is considered by the House Committee on Schools and Colleges, which in returning a report, says:

"To apply the funds of the State for the education of poor children exclusively, is to tax the industry and virtue of the State that the offspring of misfortune or vice may be accomplished and cultivated while the children of those who contributed the funds are left uninstructed and unimproved."

With this preamble the House committee recommends that the fund be thrown open to all, even if fewer poor are educated, offering the following resolutions: *First*, that it is inexpedient to suspend the annual appropriation of \$45,000 for the purposes of education as advised by the Governor. [The Governor advocated the suspension of the appropriation until a sum had accumulated sufficiently large to establish a system of common schools for all without the necessity of appeal for local taxation.]

Second, that it is inexpedient to apply the said appropriation to the *exclusive* education of poor children of the respective counties of the commonwealth.

Third, that the said appropriation should be applied to promote education generally among our youth and to facilitate to all of them its acquisition.

⁹ *House Journal*, 1820, 7.

Fourth, that for that purpose it is expedient to form several convenient school districts and corporations of the state, and to establish schools therein toward the support of which the share of the respective counties in the annual appropriation shall be applied as the tuition . . . received from the scholars attending the same school.

Fifth, that it is expedient to authorize an *assessment* to supply such sums as the annual appropriation in the respective counties and the tuition fees may not suffice to pay. The committee, moreover, deems its operation of private contribution with public bounty indispensable to the success of any plan of primary education.¹⁰

The history of the first decade of the new provisions shows that the really great defect in the law, if it was to serve as an expansion of the older poor-laws, was the inadequacy of a \$45,000 appropriation to reach all the poor. In 1828-9 26,690 persons voluntarily made application for state aid, of whom only 12,642 were cared for. The cost of even this number must have far exceeded the state quota; for the majority of commissioners report the average annual cost per child at \$7.00 to \$9.00.¹¹ The state appropriation was in effect reduced by the administration of the fund itself. Crude methods of dealing with public money were common in our early national life. Quotas were sent into the counties without statutory means of subjecting the authorities to a strict accountability of their stewardship. To encourage judicious and economical use of the state fund was as difficult as to check misappropriation or incompetence in handling it. Confusion of accounts — as the result of the lack of records and common bookkeeping — was the cause of controversy when certain counties which had failed to draw their quotas during the first years of the new system came finally to draw their arrearages.¹² Some of these litigations extended over a generation. The auditors' report for 1828 indicates that \$91,102.01 of the Literary Fund quotas had not been accounted for in certain

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1820, 7.

¹¹ *Quarterly Register*, American Education Society, 1831, III, 284. A number of the counties between 1818 and 1822 either could not or would not draw their quotas, for in 1821 there was \$47,001.47 in arrears.

¹² *Richmond Enquirer*, Dec. 25, 1821; — arrears 1818, \$11,331.89; — 1819, \$13,317.00; — 1820, \$14,269.41. Chap. 12, *Acts of Assembly*, 1828.

counties. It became necessary to pass an act instructing the Literary Fund Board to withhold further payment to these counties and to have the commonwealth attorneys take steps to recover these balances.¹³

Attempts to give the new law some semblance of a school system, at least as far as the public funds were concerned, were made in 1823. The expenditure of the Literary Fund was regulated by placing greater responsibility upon and power in the Second Auditor as disbursing officer of the state school money. The county commissioners were required to report annually through the Second Auditor to the General Assembly. At each session thereafter, Mr. Brown submitted a consolidated statement of disbursements and expenditures of the fund and a report on the progress of education in each county with such suggestions as the commissioners volunteered and he deemed desirable. These reports, printed in the *House Journal* of the Virginia Assembly, are remarkable educational documents. Lacking the perfunctoriness one frequently finds in state reports, they contain voluminous data on all phases of school progress effected in other states and countries. There are notes on educational gatherings within and outside the state; plans for country schoolhouses, accounts of experiments in teaching according to modern methods, suggestions for teacher-training and practice teaching, etc. In fact, Mr. Brown's investigations constitute a most comprehensive source of material for a study of this period.

Withal, it seems the Literary Fund schools gradually adapted themselves to the varied demands of this many-sided commonwealth as far as the quota would go and the nature of the law itself permitted. In 1823, Governor James Pleasants sounds an optimistic note. "These are just grounds," he says, "for believing that the money appropriated for the education of indigent children in the different counties is annually becoming more usually employed. . . . It is a subject of much gratification to reflect that the rudiments of learning, at least as far as *reading, writing*, and the elementary branches of *arithmetic*, are dispensed to a great number who otherwise

¹³ A House committee on Dec. 16, 1828, which had examined the auditor's account of the Literary Fund and reported, "It is strictly kept and accurately accounted for," placed the source of waste on the counties and precipitated this act.

would receive no education at all." He estimates the number of children of primary and grammar school age in the state at less than forty thousand,¹⁴ only half of which, according to Brown, were "poor" children. Returns from 74 counties, as given by Governor Pleasants, indicate that in 1822, 6,105 or about one-third of the poor children were being cared for at an annual expense for tuition, books, etc., of \$7.03 per child. As an early writer in the *American Quarterly Register* said: "It appears that although the plan has been attended with very differing degrees of success . . . according to the personal character of the school commissioners whose services are gratuitous there has been a steady and continued improvement throughout the state in the execution of the law."¹⁵

The reports of the commissioners to Brown, especially those of 1823, may be drawn upon for evidence of the sentiment of the state at large toward free schools. Certainly the difficulties met by the school commissioners now five years in office appear to be more than those resulting from mere class prejudices and the defects inherent in a badly drawn law. They are mainly economic and geographic in origin as the commissioners report them: (1) The county quotas are too small to care adequately for all the children; (2) parents are reluctant to spare their children's labor at home; (3) children lack "decent clothes" and food; (4) children do not learn a trade in the primary schools and the apprenticeship law is discouraged. In mountainous Franklin, Grayson, Mason, Nicholas, Allegheny, and Wythe counties, difficulty is found in locating convenient places for schools. Mason County suggests that it be allowed to support poor children in "board and bedding." This, they say, would enable the commissioners to maintain a "few permanent schools in conjunction with the inhabitants of certain neighborhoods who are disposed but unable to support schools without foreign aid." In Monongalia County, it is said, teachers get discouraged and move away and schools disappear with them before the end of the year. Nansemond, Gloucester, Harrison, Hardy report the system a success. Henrico advocates "the division

¹⁴ *House Journal*, Governor's Message, 1823.

¹⁵ "An ex-Professor," University of Virginia, *Quarterly Register*, American Education Society, 1833, V, 322.

of the county into wards, erection of permanent schoolhouses" and "suitable endowments for each district." Isle of Wight County "sends the poor to the same schools where the others go and they make as good progress. . . . The greatest difficulty is that parents cannot supply clothes and shoes." It suggests that the state furnish these from their quota. In this the Louisa and Lunenburg commissioners join. Accomac "can see no reason to change in any degree a system so laudable and beneficial." To Augusta "there are no real difficulties existing in this county to the success of the system except such as grow out of the system itself." To Campbell "nothing is wanting in the system to bring it to completion but *vigilance in the school commissioners.*" The first two quotas could not be spent in Orange: "The high-minded Virginian, although poor, revolted at the idea of his children being taught in a charity school." Fairfax "cannot induce parents to send children to school so cannot spend the quota." Practically all the counties, however, report that prejudice and false pride are fast disappearing. There is unanimity, too, in the need of food and clothing for many children, and the great need of the parents for their children's assistance on the farm is given as a common difficulty.

As has been said in another connection, the Act of 1818 did not repeal the laws regarding the education of apprentices. It was supposed to supplement them. But there is evidence of a tendency of masters to take fewer apprentices because of the expense of tuition in the new schools and difficulties arising from their establishment. Chesterfield County points out:

"The law concerning masters and apprentices whereby children bound out by the overseers of the poor are to be educated as the law prescribes, [i. e., at the master's expense] operates to the injury of this class of children by deterring many persons from taking apprentices because of the expense of educating them. Thus they are deprived of an education; and are not equipped with a trade or profession which will lead to competency or to habits that will procure respect. . . . Would it not be well to extend the benefit . . . to those bound by the overseers of the poor?"¹⁶

Williamsburg, the old colonial capital, gives the following philosophy:

"Nothing is so much to be dreaded as a system of poor laws which not only offer a bounty to pauperism, but, in truth, provide a number of

¹⁶ *House Journal*, 1824, Auditor's Report for 1823.

expensive officers. . . . The overseer of the poor ought to control the education of the poor entirely; and a sufficient local tax to educate and otherwise maintain them should be raised for the whole purpose." That is, one set of officers should take care of the whole problem of poor children. (1) Parents could be so provided for as to be able to give their children while being educated. (2) Education might be withdrawn if parents did not bind our children for a trade: "*For every system of education should be connected with labor, [as] habits of indolence are not overcome altogether by the learning of schools.* Humanity has to deplore the glaring and frequent vices of the learned. Employment, constant, regular, and useful united with proper instruction may and will enable the poor to supply their wants, know their rights and duties and maintain and discharge them."¹⁷

This latter statement is worthy of comment. In the Williamsburg commissioner's warning against the separation of "doing" and "knowing" or of "training" and "instruction" we have the conservative's philosophy for no "change in principle of education." In the colonial system, as we know, the state left education to the homes of independent means, but in the case of the apprenticed "poor" required that knowledge of a trade, good moral habits, and the power to read and write must be given by the master. After the apprenticeship system broke down, however, this union of *training* and *instruction* was lost to public education generally and the dreaded danger seen by our forebears in a "change in principle" was partially realized. Nowhere is the error so evident as in the education offered the negro in the public elementary schools just after the Civil War. Here much verbal instruction but little definite training was given. The negro received little assistance in forming sound mental and moral habits, no training, in fact, in making either a living or a life. Much of the solution of the so-called negro problem, it now seems, lies in the operation of the idea that education must unite these two aspects necessary to all real learning, if real culture is to be achieved.

Certainly, it cannot be claimed for the School Act of 1818, that it answered the needs of republican government. Had it done so it would have placed Virginia far ahead of all other American states. It created no "system," for the school commissioners provided were little more than disbursing officers of the quotas. In many respects it became a serious obstacle to future progressive school legislation. To be sure, the creation of an educational poor fund out of the Literary

¹⁷ *House Journal*, 1824, Auditor's Report.

Fund was a natural first step in the expansion of public conscience. But unhappily it gave current class distinctions such depth of root that long years after the Civil War parents tended to avoid common free schools because they were too reminiscent of these "poor" schools and it was felt they jeopardized the future social standing of their children. Keen prejudice, aroused among the middle classes against "free" education as thus defined by statute, crystallized in a conception that might otherwise have died in the progress of democracy. The law, however, was a definite beginning of the long struggle toward our present scheme. As an Englishman and early professor of the University of Virginia said, after the law had been in operation ten years, "Notwithstanding its defects it is likely to be continued; and it is probably as good as any other that it would be practicable to substitute for it."¹⁸

The deficiencies of the "pauper" system were, of course, disappointing to the sage of Monticello. In a letter (1820) to Cabell, Jefferson comments on the successful efforts of Governor T. DeWitt Clinton for better common school facilities in New York State,¹⁹ and thinks it ought to stimulate the Virginia legislature "to look to the reputation and safety of their own country, to rescue it from the degradation of becoming the Barbary of the Union and falling into the ranks of our negroes . . . to that condition it is fast looking. . . ." In support of his criticism he gives the following figures for 1820 from New York:

6,000	.....	number of elementary schools.
300,000	.....	" " pupils in elementary schools.
\$160,000	.....	pay of teachers " " "
40	.....	number of established academies.
2,218	.....	" " pupils in established academies.
718	.....	" " students in five colleges.
\$730,000	.....	appropriated to colleges.

A grand total of \$2,500,000 for education in New York! Without commenting on the statistics of Virginia, he caustically

¹⁸ London *Quarterly Journal*, July, 1831, also *Quarterly Register*, American Education Society, Vol. V, 322.

¹⁹ Richmond *Enquirer*, Nov. 28, 1820.

observes: "What a pigmy to this has Virginia become with a population about equal to New York!"

Jefferson still advocated the ward system as opposed to the county unit. In his plan one hundred counties divided into twelve districts each would supply the state adequately with 1,200 primary schools. Averaging thirty to a school (fifty, it will be noted, was the average in New York) the 360,175 school children of Virginia (1820) could be well cared for. Every community, he observes, could easily build a log schoolhouse in common and support its teacher "with contributions of pork, beef, and corn in proportion." In many cases they might pay tuition, leaving their quota of the Literary Fund for those who could pay nothing. "The truth is," he writes, "the want of a common education with us is not from our poverty but from the lack of an orderly system. . . . More money is now paid for the education of a part than would be paid for the whole if systematically arranged."²⁰

This latter statement was, of course, quite true in part, but Jefferson in his admiration for New York schools never stressed the means by which that state achieved its "orderly system." New York was the one state which had developed a strong central administration of schools. In Virginia it was, in fact, a question of educating the people to the value of "literary" education and to the power of coöperation, as well as a question of an efficient state administration of funds and a satisfactory method of attaining them without resorting to too great direct tax. Moreover, effecting an orderly system at this time raised the question of which should first receive the bounty of a limited fund, the University or the common schools. This question, it may be interpolated, has been a perennial one for popular oratory in the Virginia legislature ever since.²¹

There is no doubt that Jefferson was the great apostle of popular education as he was democracy's greatest exponent. All the great political leaders, Barbour, Cabell, Campbell, Garnett, McDowell, Mercer, Madison, Nichols, Ruffner, etc., who wrought earnestly for free schools were debtors to his philosophy if not to his programs. Jefferson, however, not only

²⁰ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 185-86.

²¹ See recent debates on question of establishing coördinate women's college at the University of Virginia, Feb. 1, 1916, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

defeated a practical plan of common school administration by his decentralization policy, but, in centering his energies on the establishment of the University of Virginia, he made political capital of the unpopularity of the Literary Fund schools to assure its success.²² It is true that after the university project was well under way, Jefferson earnestly says he would rather abandon the University than the primaries if he had to give up either.²³ Certainly he had labored nearly a half-century to force the people to assume the duty of elementary education. Yet as a matter of practical politics, Cabell writes in 1822 and Jefferson agrees, that he must *use* the unpopularity of the existing primary school laws to promote legislation, and later, that he had allied himself with the party demanding popular schools and subsidized academies in order to assuage the growing unpopularity of the university movement.²⁴ At still another time, Cabell thinks it prudent to be "neutral toward the academies and primary schools" as the funds are limited and he fears a competitor for the Literary Fund.²⁵ Again, in 1823, Cabell writes:

"The primary schools are in a state of discredit . . . if we amend the system at this time, and give it credit and honor, this *ally* will become our worst enemy, the popular branch would swallow up all the funds."²⁶

He thinks they should act in good faith to the primary schools merely by

"Not attempting to take their present state income. . . . The inherent defect of the system will require great alteration. But for us to move in it, I think the time has not arrived."²⁷

In reply, Jefferson says he is converted to the opinion that:

"We should let the primary schools be for the present and avail ourselves of their temporary discredit, and of the breeze in our favor until the University is entirely secure . . . and then come forward heartily as patrons of the primaries, on some plan which will allow us a fairer share of the common fund. . . . I have written Mr. Rives to retract the opinion I had expressed to him in favor of immediately taking up the subject of remodeling those schools."²⁸

²² Randolph, 109, 120. Cabell protests vigorously these accusations against Jefferson. ²³ *Ibid.*, 267. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 268. So keen was the contest that even the several denominational colleges, it seems, annulled the claims of higher education on the fund in fighting each other. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 269. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 268. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

The result is a divorce of the primary school from the college and University party; henceforth Cabell, Jefferson, etc., are, as the former expresses it, a band of steadfast patriots devoted to the "holy cause of the University," till its success be assured beyond any possibility of failure. Then the second and third steps, colleges and academies and primary schools,²⁹ may be effected on rounding out the general plan of popular education that had already been before the Virginia people nearly fifty years. But Jefferson saw before his death only the consummation of the University of Virginia.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

CHAPTER VII

ATTEMPTS TO CORRECT THE DEFECTS OF THE LITERARY FUND SCHOOLS. THE FAILURE OF THE DISTRICT FREE SCHOOL ACT OF 1829. SECTIONALISM IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF 1829-30

A doubtful success of the free school party, after the reverses of 1818, was the District Free School Act of 1829. This act gave the counties optional authority to use a portion of their Literary Fund quota, whenever supplemented by a specified local subscription, to erect permanent schoolhouses for common use. It was a permissive statute, avoiding the issue of compulsory taxation for state school purposes.

The Act of 1818 made primary education a gift to the destitute, to those willing to accept the brand of pauperism in a social system based on wealth and caste. The state university, hardly begun, was already looked upon as an institution for the privileged classes. The intermediate schools, necessary to bridge the gap between the primary schools and the university, had not been subsidized. The great body of small tax-payers, "the bone and sinew of the state," as one florid governor put it, were still struggling with the problem of providing education for their children. In the absence of an endowed academy or classical school in the neighborhood, there were just two ways to reach the university: One must either employ a family tutor or coöperate with several families in employing one in common. In the early days of the state a neighborhood school was organized in this way, with nothing more permanent than the teacher's baggage. Owing to sparse population or lack of neighborhood coöperation, the more ambitious farmers, in order to maintain a school at all, were frequently compelled to subscribe several times over the usual tuition fees. Many were compelled,

in addition, to board their children in homes near the school. These difficulties placed elementary education beyond the reach of large numbers of the children of the state. Before it could be made accessible, indifferent and unwilling citizens must be aroused and educated to the necessity of public education and shown the way to pay for it without too great sacrifice. This way must lie ultimately in taxation, which could only be popularized by reducing, through state subsidy, the cost of private education in all grades of schools till larger numbers of small freeholders should patronize them and finally come to accept public taxation, supplemented by state moneys, as more economical than the indirect tax of the fee system or subscription.

Meanwhile, there was general dissatisfaction with the state policy. Enough money, it was commonly objected, had been expended to have achieved something more than an ornamental top and a very insecure foundation of a state school system. For this condition of affairs the leaders of school parties were largely responsible. For, as it has been pointed out several times, while the progressive leaders were fumbling over the details of educational administration, — Jefferson endeavoring to create a state university and *force* an indifferent people to initiate their own local schools, and Mercer, on the experience of Connecticut and Massachusetts, trying to *entice* the people into taxation by liberal state subsidy — customary thinking had prevailed in the mere extension of the colonial provision for the education of the poor, and the almost complete neglect of the middle or higher elementary schools.

Friends of the middle schools waged a bitter fight for recognition and a participation in state funds. Thomas Ritchie had consistently advocated subsidizing the middle schools as his "cause" (*vide* p. 69) and through the *Enquirer* was, no doubt, the most powerful influence in securing the Acts of 1821 and 1834, which permitted the secondary schools to participate in the state fund when its income should exceed \$60,000, the amount already voted the primary schools and the state university. *The Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, a Presbyterian church paper, was another strong agency of reform. "Philodemus," presumably its editor, the Reverend

Dr. John Holt Rice, in seven earnest open letters¹ to the president and directors of the Literary Fund, stresses the fact that a misdirected energy and bad policy had dissipated the dream of popular education in Virginia. In ten years one million dollars had been spent on primary schools and the University, — an incomplete system. Over one half million dollars had been already spent on the new University alone. Not counting the average cost of \$600 to each individual student, the state paid, even when all the dormitories were filled, more than \$150 a year per student. "Philodemus" is by no means an enemy of the University, but he says, "Should that institution turn out to be one for the benefit of the few, my friendship will be changed into something more than indifference."²

The people of the West regarded the University as a main obstacle to the establishment of common schools and state appropriation for their support. Their delegates had opposed the University in the legislatures of 1815-18, as J. C. Cabell himself indicates. Judge E. S. Duncan, in 1842³ states that the West, fighting then for a sound primary school system, had feared that the University would be too aristocratic and would absorb all the revenue of the Literary Fund. "Only the powerful influence of Jefferson himself," he said, "could convince them that the university party was able to begin at both ends at once." The result had been a "big university and insufficient primary schools." Alleged failure to gain their share in the Literary Fund, to obtain a redistribution of representatives in the General Assembly, and alleged discrimination against them in the matter of internal improvements had long been the cause of dissatisfaction with

¹ *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, "Philodemus," IX, 83-6, 133-7, 196-201, 201-4, 205-210, 315-8, 350-4.

² *Ibid*, IX, 199. This gentleman makes an interesting note on the establishment of the University: "I do believe they honestly aimed at the general good. But, being without experience and keeping their eyes too much fixed on the splendid literary establishments of Great Britain, they have formed such an university as we see. But the great literary establishments of England are in their very foundations aristocratic. It is no wonder, then, that we have an institution not at all adapted to the common run of planters and farmers." Certainly in Mr. Jefferson's protest against the English university course of study, his antagonism to Latin, his emphasis upon science, etc., the founder of the University of Virginia himself is not fairly represented.

³ *House Journal*, 1841-2, Document No. 7, p. 8. Cf. Mercer's bill and argument, 1817, p. 67.

the western counties. As the tide of Jacksonian democracy rose, this section gained the power and social self-consciousness to fight for its own. Virginia was a house divided against itself from this time till the Civil War, a unity only in the loosest political sense. The slight thread that held the two sections together was dangerously strained in the heated constitutional convention of 1829-30.⁴

Before proceeding to the Act of 1829, a few facts on the rapid internal changes that had taken place in the state since the United States census of 1790 will help lay bare the economic basis for sectionalism. During the forty years, 1790-1829, the population west of the Blue Ridge had increased from 127,594 to 319,516 whites. The East had increased but 48,222 in the same time, making its total white population 362,745.⁵ But in the West there were only 35,887 freeholders to the East's 56,846; while representation in the Assembly remained for the western counties what it had been in 1790. In 1829 there were 440,000 slaves in the state. Of these only 50,000 were west of the Blue Ridge.⁶ Slaves comprised 2/3 per cent of the western white population, 17 per cent of the Valley population, where large slave holdings were rare; while, in the East, slaves exceeded the white population by 40,000.⁷ On the other hand, eastern Virginia had, in 1815, paid \$350 in taxes for every dollar paid by the West, in 1829, twenty counties of the East still paid three fourths of the state taxes, the entire forty counties of the West paying the remainder.⁸ There is little wonder that a delegate from Norfolk, attempted to substantiate his claim that taxation and representation spring from different foundations and flow into different and distant oceans.⁹ Again, Mr. Cooke, of Norfolk, wished it known that he had his "theories of Government as well as the wild democrats of the middle and western Virginia" and was not to be sacrificed on theirs.¹⁰

⁴ *Vide* Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia, 1776-1861*, the best text on the general history of Virginia during this period.

⁵ *Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, 1829-30*, 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-12. By estimate of Ex-Governor Barbour of Orange County.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207. Virginia contained one fourth of all the slaves in the Union, more than were in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee combined, and more than four times the number of any one of them. *Richmond Enquirer*, Jan. 26, 1832. Report of address of Wm. H. Brodnax of Dinwiddie County to the General Assembly. ⁸ *Ibid.*, 1829, 112. ⁹ *Ibid.*, 113. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

Property was on the defensive. Intrenched in the first state constitution,¹¹ scoring a point in the Act of 1818, it was reluctant to lose an advantage in the face of a growing anti-slavery propaganda. The early American idea was that universal suffrage is a right to be *earned* before it is to be enjoyed. The more one has, the more power one should exercise; for property makes for permanence and is the only safe basis for suffrage.¹² In the Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 John Randolph gave vent to this defense of wealth in a vehement protest against the whole tendency to allow the propertyless and incompetent to share unearned the benefits of property.

"Why, sir, the richest man of Virginia, be that man who he may, would make a good bargain to make you a present of his estate, provided you give him bond upon that estate, to allow him to tax it as he pleases, and to spend the money as he pleases. It is of the very essence of property that none shall tax it but the owner himself, or one who has a common feeling and interest with him. It does not require a plain planter to tell an assembly like this, more than half of whose members are gentlemen of the law, that no man may set his foot on your land without your permission, but as a trespasser; and that he renders himself liable to an action for damages. This is of the very essence of property. 'But,' he says, 'thank you for nothing.' 'With all my heart.' 'I do not mean to set my foot on your land, but not owning one foot of land myself, I will stand here in the highway, which is as free to me as it is to you, and I will tax your land not to *your* heart's content but to *mine*.'"¹³

¹¹ *Vide* Beard, *Economic Interpretations of the Constitution of the United States*.

¹² A number of working men meeting at Harmony Hall, New York, passed a resolution, according to the *Courier and Free Enquirer*, of that city, May 20, 1830, demanding equal educational opportunity and equal property rights for themselves and their children. More than a dozen newspapers in the North indorsed this "Skidmore-Robert Owen socialism." To certain conservative Southerners this movement was an attack on wealth and government by the ignorant and thriftless. A gentleman in the *Southern Review* — a magazine published in Charleston, S.C., and widely circulated in Virginia — published his protest in an article "Agrarianism and Education." Aristocracy and wealth must be preserved as necessary to scientific and literary advancement, — he did not mark the lack of it in the Southern states, — while universal suffrage, free clothes, free instruction and, finally, free land at maturity, as advocated by this convention, would rob the poor of any incentive to rise and kill science and art. Civil society itself would be destroyed — *Southern Review*, 1830, VIII, 30.

¹³ Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, Nov. 11, 1829; *Southern Review*, VIII, 30. This explains why in 1829 only 45,000 who held property were voters out of more than 140,000 free, white male Virginians over twenty-one years old. As Governor William Branch Giles, a political ally of Jefferson, significantly states before this very convention: "Extend the right of suffrage to every man, dependent as well as independent, and you immediately open the flood gates of corruption . . . and undermine the public and private virtue of your people." Those familiar with the evolution of manhood suffrage in other states, New York in particular, know that this was not an argument peculiar to Virginia at this period.

On the floor of this convention Charles Fenton Mercer, of Loudoun, pauses, in a heated debate on representation and taxation, to say:

"The education of the people is also an object of dread, and the bill of 1817,¹⁴ which passed the House of Delegates by a very large majority notwithstanding its present unequal basis of representation, *has been the topic of special denunciation and complaint*. We are told we wish to acquire the power of educating the poor man's child at the expense of the rich. I confess I am ashamed to hear such suggestions at this day and in the capitol of Virginia. Although I perceive no connection between them and the purpose of this deliberation [representation], they spring from a source so respectable¹⁵. . . . they merit my notice. . . . Such a cause ought not to suffer for want of an advocate. . . . Since 1819 we have applied \$45,000 a year to the education of the poor and 10,000 children are imperfectly taught for about six months in the year by its application. Except in Brook County, where about five dollars a year suffices for the education of poor children, it takes about eight dollars a head; while in Connecticut and Scotland the cost is one fourth of that. *Will the rich anywhere complain of a system which, while the children of the poor are instructed, enables them to educate their own at a cost so reduced?* And is the education of the people who are everywhere in America the acknowledged guardian of their own rights, the source of political power, a *subject of mere Eastern or Western interest in Virginia?* Who are the people of the West? Whence did they spring? From the East? Have they forgotten their common origin?"¹⁶

The great common school champion of the western delegates in the Constitutional Convention was Alexander Campbell. As he had led in a democratization of the Christian church, founding a sect known as Christians or Disciples of Christ, so he spent a great part of his life in democratizing elementary education in Virginia. He proposed the only resolution made during the convention, to give constitutional sanction to public education. "A resolution," he said years later, "replete with blessings . . . which was nailed to the table by a mere parliamentary maneuver; by those, too, who had not courage to vote against it or to formally oppose it." He continues:

"This apathy of the legislators is supported by a more fatal apathy of the multitudes of the people . . . since the project of getting them [common schools] was first named, this apathy on the part of the great mass of

¹⁴ *Vide* p. 67; italics mine.

¹⁵ Mr. Green, a delegate from Culpeper County.

¹⁶ Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, 1829-30, 202.

uneducated (not wholly confined to them either) has generally, even after a system was got up by law, called for some compulsory measure.”¹⁷

Mr. Campbell, with great feeling, raises the question of eastern and western differences as a fundamental cause of failure to secure legislation. He says:

“We want colleges for those who . . . have more [intellectual] appetite, taste and capacity than the common standard; and we want common schools for all. We blame not the aristocracy of the East nor the memory of Mr. Jefferson for erecting and liberally endowing one great Eastern university . . . we only blame them for not granting similar favors to the West and good common schools to the whole country. Shall we of the West be satisfied that the Legislature of Virginia shall bestow \$450,000 on one Eastern university and put us off with an annual pittance for common schools?”

He epitomizes the educational platform of the West in a striking comparison of the two sections:

“Our brethren of the East have difficulties that lie not in our way; (1) two sorts of population of great political disparity . . . a misfortune which tends to aristocracy. . . . Now *common schools* and aristocracy are not . . . homogeneous. A patrician will not have a plebeian system of schools. It would undignify his son to learn out of the same grammar . . . with the son of a plebeian. In the West we are too poor . . . political aristocracy first and last stands on gold . . . the transition is easy from democracy to aristocracy. . . . A lucky lottery ticket might convert a flaming democrat into a spruce . . . little aristocrat. If we were richer it would be so. . . . Aristocracy does not thrive in rough and high country like Western Virginia; our farms are small . . . this makes the district system possible to us.

“*We do not want poor schools for poor scholars, or gratuitous instruction for paupers; we want common schools for common wants and the question is: How shall we get them?* Poor schools are a failure because the most honorable will do without education altogether, rather than admit their abject poverty or afterward wear what they consider the opprobrium of having been charity scholars.”¹⁸

In turning now to an analysis of the optional District Free School Act of 1829, it may be assumed, from the foregoing evidence, that no compulsory legislation affecting property could easily pass the General Assembly. Both democracy

¹⁷ Mr. Campbell here touches upon the “fatal apathy” of the commons that Jefferson was so hopeful of arousing to local initiation of schools. Let it be said again that it was this idea of Jefferson’s that permitted no reconciliation between his and Mercer’s plans for the administration of public education. Mr. Campbell later, in 1845, places the blame, not so much on self-interested property as upon the widespread indifference among the people themselves who would make up the enrollment of the common schools.

¹⁸ Address of Alexander Campbell before the Clarksburg Educational Convention, 1841, *House Journal*, 1841-2, Document 7, 31; *vide also* Proceedings Constitutional Convention, 1829-30.

and aristocracy were afraid of centralized power in taxation for schools, for fear it might be put into the wrong hands! Hence the state adopted a policy of permissive rather than compulsory school legislation. Recent legislation in the interest of compulsory education for the white child and the negro presents an interesting parallelism. The present statute leaves the question to county or city option. In fact the modern permissive Compulsory Education Act of 1908,¹⁹ and the early nineteenth-century permissive Act of 1829 represent the same stages in democratization; the negro in contemporary history taking the place of a white class in the early Jacksonian period. The question, Can property afford to tax itself for the education of a numerous dependent group? is still being asked by many intelligent people of the state and, as yet, few localities have assumed this tax burden! The Act of February 26, 1829,²⁰ was an attempt to keep abreast of the best experience of the other states, particularly New York. It was not unlike the dormant aldermanic law of 1796, except that it placed the right of decision on the voters of the counties instead of the county courts. It perhaps more nearly resembled Mercer's proposals in the General Education Bill of 1817. It was an attempt to convert the primary schools of 1818 into a common school system which would include the middle class and avoid the declaration of poverty.

The schools under the new act were to be directed by the Second Auditor, now designated the "Superintendent of the Literary Fund." He was allowed a state stipend of eight hundred dollars a year. The success of the system was made to depend upon voluntary contributions — neighborhood assessments — rather than upon a compulsory county school tax. The motive for the assumption of a voluntary tax lay in the supplement promised by the state to all local contributions, and in the reduced cost of tuition made possible by the union of the new fund with the Literary Fund quota. The chief objects of this bill, it was said during its consideration, were: (1) to give greater efficiency to the state appro-

¹⁹ Acts of Assembly, 1908, 640.

²⁰ Acts of General Assembly, 1828-9, Chap. XII, 12. "An Act to Reduce into One Act the Several Acts Concerning the Literary Fund."

priation of \$45,000, to make better provision for schools and teachers by affording opportunity for local financial coöperation, and (2) to remove the odious distinction between the *rich* and the *poor*. The provisions of the Act, though optional, are interesting because they represent a decided effort toward state control:

(1) Each county was to be divided into districts from three to seven miles square, at the most convenient point of which a school was to be erected.

(2) Whenever the inhabitants of such a district would contribute three fifths of a sum necessary to provide a school-house, the school commissioners were authorized to supply the remaining two fifths from their annual quota of the Literary Fund, provided it did not exceed 10 per cent of their county quota, and provided one acre of land, at least, was set aside forever for school purposes.

(3) The county school commissioners were authorized to give one hundred dollars out of the Literary Fund quota toward the salary of a teacher whenever the community would supplement it with a like sum.

(4) Schools were made free to all alike, to be controlled by three district trustees, two elected by the annual contributors and one by the county school commissioners.

(5) The Second Auditor was given greater administrative powers, and the Board of Directors of the Literary Fund — now consisting of the Governor, Treasurer and Second Auditor — was given general supervision of the state system. In a small way this latter may be regarded as a step in the differentiation of a special department of education from the general officers of the state. In thus designating the Second Auditor "Superintendent," Virginia inaugurated her first State Superintendent of Schools.

Unhappily, the District Free Schools plan was so designed that its success in operation depended upon a machinery of political democracy not yet worked out. It received scant support in either the eastern or western counties. The Superintendent of the Literary Fund expressed the opinion in his first report that it was destined to failure because it did not *compel local taxation on property*. Left to the option of the counties the law was generally ignored, although it was theo-

retically in the power of the electorate to accept it. Some counties openly declared a district system unsuited to their condition; some gave it a half-hearted trial. Many counties were satisfied with the old law, or, at least, took the attitude of Cumberland County, which thought "the old law superior to the new in sparsely settled sections, of which 19/20 of Virginia is made up."²¹

There were three striking exceptions to the general apathy — Franklin and Washington Counties, within the present area of Virginia, and Monroe, now part of West Virginia. Within a year of the enactment of the law Franklin County accepted its provisions, dividing itself into thirty-four school districts. One district was chosen for experimental purposes. A substantial brick schoolhouse was built. The salary of the teacher was paid by community subscription, supplemented by the district share of the Literary Fund quota. The school was open six months to fifty-five children, and the commissioner enthusiastically reported to Brown: "The expense per child per annum was only one half of the previous year; and of the fifty-five educated, forty-eight would have been excluded under the old law." Lacking the aid of an obligatory tax, the experiment went little further than this. Where dependence was placed upon the Literary Fund alone, and in many districts it seems this was necessary, several insuperable difficulties arose: (1) The quota for the district was only about one sixth of the sum necessary to equip it; (2) the whole county quota would be consumed in aiding the building, at \$70, of ten schoolhouses; (3) it would require the total county quota for 3 2/3 years to aid each of the thirty-four districts similarly; (4) after every district "shall have been provided with schoolhouses the annual quota will be only one fourth of the amount necessary to grant the aid given in the first district."²² This effort in Franklin, it would seem, achieved little except to show the necessity of public taxation.

Monroe County laid off thirty-one districts, built schools in two, fixed school age at eight to sixteen years, elected

²¹ *House Journal*, Report of Second Auditor, Cumberland County, 1830.

²² *Ibid.*, Franklin County, 1830.

trustees, and organized a substantial system.²³ But here, too, success was limited by reliance upon the meager state funds for the support of the system. Washington County went beyond Franklin and Monroe in contributing time and labor for buildings. As Superintendent Brown reports:

"The first of the District Free Schools have been established in Franklin, Monroe and Washington, — an experiment of unbounded interest to the state and should be attempted wherever the density of population will admit of it, but at the same time it is a delusion to suppose that the system can ever be upheld solely at the expense of the public treasury. Inhabitants must imitate Washington County and contribute a portion of their time, labor, and substance for the purchase of land, schoolhouses with furniture, appendages and fuel, and for raising by some effectual means of *taxation* or contribution a permanent provision for their teachers."²⁴

"It is evident that to put into operation such a system in the thirty-four districts, instruction must stop two or three years till schoolhouses are erected, and even then twenty-four of the thirty-four districts will have no money for instruction unless: (1) the people of the district furnish their own schoolhouse and contribute to the support of the teacher, or, (2) the quota be increased fourfold or appropriation made from the public treasury. To change from the present to the district system we must have means beyond the Literary Fund from local taxation."

The Superintendent here draws the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that in Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut only the teachers' salaries were paid out of the permanent funds. Books were furnished the children by the parents; and the schoolhouses, sites, and appendages were provided by a tax upon the school district imposed at legal meetings of the people. He deplores the lack in his state of that local spirit which necessarily conditions the progress of any scheme, giving New York's common schools as authority for his statement that all permanent school improvement must ultimately depend upon the interest taken in local school affairs by the people themselves. "The New York School fund has reached only \$100,000; yet, with little more than twenty-one cents a child (\$12 to each school) 480,041 were sent to school for an average period of eight months at a total cost per child of \$2.²⁵ Again in 1835 Brown insists: "Experience indicates that a district free school system is impossible so long as voluntary contributions are depended

²³ *Ibid.*, Monroe County (now West Virginia), 1830.

²⁴ *House Journal*, reports of these three counties in "extracts" of Commissioner's Reports, 1830.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: quoted from New York State Superintendent's Report.

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The District Free School Act, 1829 [pp. 101, 102]

upon, and the Literary Fund will never be enough. Taxation is indispensable to its existence.”²⁶ And in 1838, he repeats:

“While so extensive an apathy on the subject of education prevails . . . no reliance can be placed in the permanence of free schools established under the existing legal regulation, depending chiefly as they do for support on voluntary contributions. Taxation must be resorted to.”²⁷

A majority of those counties which favored a district plan considered it impossible to create such a system without larger revenue than the people were apt to vote. Charlotte advises

“taxation on all the property of the state, [and would] respectfully suggest that if the poor are ever instructed to the extent that the nature of our government and the situation of our country require, the rich must in a great degree sustain the expense . . . for [in return] the poor will defend the treasures of the rich. . . .”

“Levy a tax on all property, which, added to the Literary Fund, would be sufficient to educate all children rich and poor for the common avocations of life. The rich could then be removed by their parents to higher schools to qualify them to fill with advantage the office of government and it is probable that here they would meet with some competitors who were raised in the humble walks of life and who were their companions in the primary schools. ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself’ is good for individuals, why not for governments? Would it not be a surer way to secure the perpetuity of our civil institutions than the inquiry of our legislature: ‘Will this or that measure be popular with the rich?’”²⁸

Moreover, as Mr. Brown said to his commissioners, in a circular of information in 1829, when the District Act was passed: “In a country like ours, the component parts of which are so essentially different from each other . . . no uniform plan of education can easily be devised to provide for the real wants or is likely to accord with the opinions and wishes of all.” The commissioners’ reports in 1830 are indeed so many evidences of this fact. They indicate genuine difficulties and do not necessarily reflect sectional and political differences. In many instances the systems of 1818 and 1829 are compared. Midland counties, such as Amherst, Goochland, Montgomery, and the more mountainous districts across the Range, as Greenbrier, Morgan and Wood, and Tazewell in the southwest, think it inexpedient to attempt the new

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Special Report of Second Auditor on “Free Schools,” 1835.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1838, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Charlotte County, 1830.

district system in the thinly settled sections. In an earlier report (1824) Nicholas County, in the mountains, cannot spend its quota because a common convenient site cannot be found. "If the Literary Fund Board would board children at some central place, — say, at fifty cents a week, — common schools would be made possible."²⁹ Again, Charlotte County, in Piedmont, thinks the district system unsatisfactory. It cannot build permanent schools "because of the changes in neighborhoods. . . . There will be perpetual disagreement as to the proper site for the schoolhouse." Chesterfield, however, thinks it would greatly reduce the cost per pupil. Albemarle thinks that the schools of 1818 should "be abolished as defective and the system of 1829 generally adopted by amendment, making such law *imperative*, instead of *discretionary*." James City County, surrounding Williamsburg, deems it "of vastly more importance that the laboring classes be taught to labor industriously and skillfully than that they should be taught to read and write. These last too often tend to idleness and dissipation in the absence of regular habits of labor, induced by early training." Kanawha County "expresses its pleasure at the operation of the old system of primary schools in this country." Cumberland and Loudoun, too, are satisfied with it. The former attempts to prove the efficacy of the Act of 1818 if properly administered. Berkeley County, now West Virginia, says, "Under the new District Free School system, you just build up a plan by which the parsimonious and niggardly may educate their children at the expense of the liberal and just."³⁰ Withal, the enthusiasm for a district system was not as great as the debates in the House seem to indicate and there was more open opposition to it in the West than in the East.

In the effort to define indigence, in answer to Mr. Brown's request of those counties operating under the old primary system, Berkeley thinks the indigent are "such parents as are unable to pay for their children's education"; Cumberland, those parents who (1) have no property and do not make enough to support and educate their children, (2) those

²⁹ *House Journal*, Nicholas County, 1824. This is quite common in the rural high school districts at present, but, of course, the state does not pay the board on the basis of this suggestion.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Berkeley County, 1830.

parents who have property but not enough in the judgment of the commissioner "with all labor to support and educate their children." Giles considers indigent "all parents not worth \$150, exclusive of household furniture." In Hardy County "indigent children are: (1) those whose parents have not enough money to pay tuition without depriving themselves of comforts necessary to themselves and families; (2) propertyless orphans; (3) apprentices whose masters cannot carry out their contracts to educate them." In Henrico, children whose parents would "deprive themselves if forced to pay" tuition are indigent. To Loudoun, indigents are: (1) "a man who has a small house and lot but his family is large and it is obvious that he cannot pay school bills; (2) day laborers without property and with large families; (3) children of industrious widows who are not paupers, and (4) the pauper class whose parents are often lazy and intemperate."

In these illustrations are included the main definitions returned to the Auditor. They indicate quite clearly the ever-widening circle of those included as "free" pupils. But, as Berkeley County states: "No matter how liberal a construction of 'indigent' is made, there is always a class excluded just above that included."

To summarize this chapter it may be said that the District Free School plan failed for three sufficient reasons: (1) it necessitated local initiative and coöperation, the machinery of political democracy which had not yet been effected;³¹ (2) it provided no state system of public taxation or school administration; (3) to such a sparsely settled country the scheme was ill adapted. It was frequently impossible to find a center of population sufficiently dense to support a school which could be reached by children in time for school in the morning.

The failure of the West to embrace a system which its enthusiasm had helped to write into law is evidence that that section had not gone far enough ahead of the older settlements to offset the political disadvantage of county

³¹ At the time the District Act was before the Assembly, advocates of township government endeavored to revive Jefferson's gospel and break the autocracy of the old county government.

government. Transportation, too, was an even greater obstruction to consolidation of schools then than it is now. To travel long distances over wretched roads to a permanent schoolhouse built in a neighboring community, granting the site had been agreed upon, was a prospect to arouse community jealousies and to deepen the feeling against taxation of one section for the support of another. To put into successful operation the Act of 1829 required a heroic leadership which did not appear in any of the counties!

CHAPTER VIII

THE STATUS OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER. HIS ORIGIN AND INDIFFERENT QUALIFICATIONS A FACTOR IN RETARDING THE GROWTH OF STATE PRIMARY FREE SCHOOLS. PLANS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS

THE parish minister and family tutor embodied colonial Virginia's conception of the professional teacher. On them the colony depended for the major part of its secondary education, and in them, if the authority of Jefferson is to be accepted, the Old Dominion was a peer among the colonies.¹ Of the character of the teacher and the work done in the colonial "English" or elementary schools, we are not so certain. Hugh Jones tells us in 1724: "In most parishes there are schools (little Houses being built on Purpose) where are taught English and Writing; but to prevent the sowing of the Seeds of Dissent and Faction it is to be wished that the Masters or Mistresses should be such as are approved or licensed by the Minister and Vestry of the Parish or justices of the County, the Clerks of the Parishes being generally most proper for this Purpose or (in case of their incapacity or refusal) such others as can be secured."² "The clerks of the Parishes" were undoubtedly a main source of supply of elementary school teachers. It was so in England. The English scholar, Arthur F. Leach, says in this connection: "In places so far apart as Coventry, 1492, and Bristol, 1452 and 1502, the duty of teaching reading is expressed or implied

¹ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 185. *Vide* 109.

² Jones, Hugh, *The Present State of Virginia*, London, 1724, 70. In 1686 Governor Howard issued a general proclamation calling upon all teachers in the colony to attend the General Court at Jamestown and present testimonials of competency from their parish's foremost citizens. A number of teachers apparently were not able to comply with this order and the House of Burgesses declared their schools vacant and requested the Governor to appoint fit persons to examine applicants. Hening, II, November 4, 1686.

as one of the principal duties of Parish Clerks. . . . Even in 1801 a writer in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, complaining of the decadence of parish clerks, suggests that they be taken from a better class 'so as to make good schoolmasters.'"³ This practice must have been transplanted to Virginia. The Crown early offered a bounty of £20 to encourage ministers, schoolmasters, and clerks to emigrate to America.⁴ In parish records, such as that of Bristol,⁵ the salary of a parish clerk is given as 2000 pounds of tobacco, the minister's, 16,000. In case of the minister's death or temporary absence, the clerk assumed the duties of a lay reader of the services "if he could read tolerably well." In a few parishes the clerk took the minister's place for long periods, but in the main he must have had more time and necessity to devote to teaching than had the minister himself. In the colonists' zeal "for peace and good government and for the security of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Established Church of England" it is reasonable to believe that the elementary teacher was selected with some care as to character, if not as to scholarship. Records may some day acquit a majority of the teachers of these "little Houses" of being fugitives from justice, or "low-bred intemperate adventurers of the Old World." There were, no doubt, many such characters among those who came to the colony under indenture, but we are too apt to allow an occasional notice or advertisement in the Maryland and Virginia gazettes of the "escape from jail of a servant who follows the occupation of schoolmaster" to determine for us the status of the colonial elementary teacher.

There is no doubt whatever that the family tutor was carefully selected with respect to scholarship, character, and the niceties of English culture. Fithian,⁶ in a diary of his services as tutor to the family of Councilor Robert Carter, informs us that Mr. Carter preferred a tutor trained on the Continent because his pronunciation of English ("as most of his children

³ Monroe's *Cyclopedia of Education*, II, 3. Arthur F. Leach, *Church Schools and other contributions to the history of elementary education in England*.

⁴ Fothergill, Gerald, *A List of Emigrant Ministers and Schoolmasters to America, 1790-1811*.

⁵ Chamberlayne, Churchill G., *Bristol Parish Vestry Book*, 11, 12, 19, 29, 30, 39, *et passim*. There is, however, no reference to the services of these clerks as schoolmasters.

⁶ Fithian, Philip Vickers, *Journal and Letters*, 1767-74, 147.

are apt to be taught in this") excelled "the Scotch, native, or ordinary English school young gentleman."

The Revolution did much to destroy Virginia's source of public and private teachers. Two thirds of the colonial parish ministers failed to return to their charges after the War, and many parishes disappeared. The place of the clergyman schoolmaster was partially filled in the secondary schools by a newer type of teacher, the Scotch-Irish dominie. He made a notable impression upon the new state. Mercer says: "These European teachers were the best scholars and ablest teachers if not always the best men."⁷ For the post-Revolution elementary teacher in Virginia, we have little guarantee of either his character or qualification. As Professor Paul Monroe has well said, Washington Irving's description of Ichabod Crane is no great exaggeration of the American common school teacher of a century ago. The supply was limited and the elementary school too little appreciated everywhere. "The need for an adequate supply of teachers extends," says Mercer in his Princeton address, "throughout the whole system of American popular education."⁸

Virginia suffered, in this respect, more than any of the Northern states. With the disintegration of the colonial government, its teaching class, its school control, and its scheme of licensing and supervision decayed. In spite of Jefferson's efforts, no new agency replaced the defunct Church as an arm of the state. The state evolved no means of encouraging its native sons to teach. Although Church control of elementary education weakened, New England, in the transition from colony to commonwealth, did not feel the stress of this problem. It was not destitute of a permanent class of native teachers. Furthermore, New England was not marked by any such social readjustment as that which followed the bitterly contested Separation Acts. These swept away the last vestiges of Virginia's traditional teaching classes, as they destroyed what influence the Episcopal Church retained after the Revolution. Moreover, in New England schools had been gradually evolved during a period when the population was small and gathered compactly in towns and townships. Generations of educated clergy, dominated by

⁷ Mercer C. F., *op. cit.*, 69.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

the Calvinistic conception of the relationship of education to religion and the state, had year in and year out preached the necessity of a general diffusion of knowledge.⁹ In her constitution of 1789, Massachusetts was able to require, under penalty of 20 shillings a day for violation of the ruling, that only native Americans be employed in her state schools; and these natives were required to obtain a state license.¹⁰ As Mercer puts it, "Massachusetts prohibited by law the employment of foreign [European] instructors in her schools when Virginia had scarcely any others except what she drew from the East. . . . Since Virginia has been thrown on her own resources and those of our sister states for a supply of teachers. *classical* and *domestic* education have both declined."¹¹

Virginia's *laissez-faire* policy, therefore, not only permitted a decline in education, but the impression produced on the popular mind by the class of teachers imported tended to discourage native teachers from entering the elementary school field. When the early agitation for common schools resulted in the Act of 1818, with its moderate but sudden call for teachers, the demand was out of all proportion to the supply in the state; and many of those who came from without the state for the paltry four cents a day per poor child granted by this Act were not calculated to give greater respectability to common school teaching. The county commissioners early report that the meager sum offered "operates to attract a low grade of teacher." Many masters, in the more prosperous sections, refused to do the work because of the clumsy bookkeeping involved, even for the sake of charity. Warwick County reports that it employs teachers of "as good morals and qualifications" as they can secure. Mathews County insists that the quotas from the Literary Fund "must be increased — doubled and trebled. The little at hand has *no effect to improve the character and competency* of the schools by inducing teachers of ability to seek employment. Only the most moderate and partial benefits can be expected from the very humble grade of scholarship

⁹ *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, VIII, 369.

¹⁰ Massachusetts State Constitution, 1789.

¹¹ Mercer, *op. cit.*, 71.

of most of the teachers in the common schools; men possessing scarcely any education themselves, resorting to this mode of livelihood frequently from necessity produced by the irregularity of their past lives.”¹²

Jefferson, who had attempted to provide for the training of teachers and other public servants in his proposals of 1778, comments, in 1820, perhaps too harshly, on the failure of Virginia to meet her own needs: “The mass of education in Virginia before the Revolution placed her with the foremost of her sister colonies. Where is her education now? The little we have is imported, like beggars, from other states or we import their beggars to bestow on us their miserable crumbs.”¹³

As late as 1838 Dr. George W. Dame, of Lynchburg, in writing a biographical sketch of one of the pioneers for common schools in the state, says: “The occupation of the teacher is in low repute and very few young men of Virginia who were qualified would engage in that occupation, hence their teachers were generally procured from other states.”¹⁴ The status of the teacher and the true sentiment of the state may be found in a correspondent’s reasons why poor men stay in and good men give up elementary school teaching:

“Good men [1] deem it disreputable; [2] think it is too laborious; [3] or that it pays too little; other men stay in it, because [1] they can do nothing else; [2] they out-bid good teachers; [3] they have some physical misfortune; and, [4] parents have to send their children to somebody to get rid of them. . . . In the schoolhouse . . . there is often installed a man with a heart of stone and hands of iron; too lazy to work, too ignorant to live by his wits in any other way, whose chief recommendation is his cheapness and whose chief capacity to instruct is predicated by his incapacity for other employment. . . . Of the progress of the pupils in these temples of indolence but little inquiry is made.”¹⁵

One of the persistent traditions of the state is that the early ante-bellum “Old Field”¹⁶ school teacher was an undesirable

¹² *House Journal*, Second Auditor’s Report, Mathews County, 1830.

¹³ Randolph, *op. cit.*, 185.

¹⁴ Memoir of Jonathan P. Cushing, G. W. Dame, M.D., *Quarterly Register*, American Education Society, 1838, XI, 119.

¹⁵ “Lancaster,” *Richmond Enquirer*, Jan. 24, 1843.

¹⁶ The term “Old Field” has reference to the practice of allowing long-cultivated fields to lie idle for a period “to sweeten.” This obviated the necessity of fertilizer in a country where land was cheap. Rude schoolhouses often appeared on the cleared but unused land and took their name from their location. Of course, there was no one type of schoolhouse and equipment. The average

citizen. Colonel William Gordon McCabe, for forty years after the Civil War headmaster and proprietor of a famous academy for boys in Petersburg and Richmond, comments on the character of these teachers who swarmed into Virginia between 1810 and 1830. "This was," says Colonel McCabe, "a class of stiff, formal pedagogues, despised by our boys, because they represented so little that appealed to the human side of the normally healthy boy, be he North or South."¹⁷ "They were," he adds further, "the type of pedagogue that caused our boys to guffaw over their weary platitudes and formal manners." Major W. G. Repass, superintendent of schools for Wythe County, said in 1885, in a historical sketch of education of that county: "Some of the teachers of these old field schools were invalids, some were slaves to drunkenness, some too lazy to work, most of them entirely ignorant of the art of teaching and a terror to their pupils. There were a few . . . who possessed culture, intelligence, morality, ability."¹⁸ Colonel William Giddings, superintendent of schools for Loudoun County, in the same report,¹⁹ is even harsher in his denunciation of the "Old Field" teacher of Virginia tradition.

Of course there is much to be said in defense of the better class of teachers — at least for the imported private tutors and academy masters. Many of these were great teachers, good men and became substantial citizens of the commonwealth, but many others were unable to evaluate Southern institutions and traditions. They were irritated by ideals so entirely at variance with their own. Even Fithian, a

school was not unlike those of rural districts of other states. It was innocent of the simplest laws of sanitation, but, perhaps, no worse in this respect than many in the twentieth century. Beyond rude benches facing the walls and a high desk for the teacher there were no unnecessary furnishings. A teacher usually came into the community under the patronage of some influential citizen who often donated the use of a spare room in his house, an unused "office" or other outhouse on his property, for school purposes. *Vide A Visiting Teacher's Description of an Old Field School in Virginia in 1801*, Barnard, *American Journal Education*, XIII, 748, cited from John Davis' *Travels of Four and One-half Years in the United States 1798-1801*. Mr. Davis went to Virginia under the patronage of Jefferson to teach in what he called a "log hut." For description of a western frontier school in 1809, by a former pupil, *vide Haymond, History of Harrison County*, 286.

¹⁷ Education in Virginia before and after the Revolution. An Address on Early Schoolmasters, University Virginia, 1888, 38, 39.

¹⁸ Virginia School Report, 1885, Part Third, 288.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

cultured and successful family tutor, is disturbed by his own deficiencies in "Dancing, Boxing, Fiddle-playing, Small Sword and Cards," by the "Jargon of Dogs and Horses," the absence of the "social level among the people," and exclaims: "How different the manners of the people. I try to be as cheerful as I can and yet I am blamed for being as stupid as a Nun . . . at home I am thought to be noisy enough; here I am thought to be silent and circumspect as a spy."²⁰ In writing to his successor, Fithian tells his friend he will be "smitten with the novelty" of the Southern manner of living. "You will make ten thousand comparsions which will have a tendency to keep you doubtful and unsettled in your notions of Morality and Religion." Finally he says: "You come here, it is true, with an intention to *teach*, but you ought likewise to have an inclination to *learn*. At any rate, I solemnly injoin it upon you that you never suffer the Spirit of a Pedagogue to attend you without the walls of your little seminary."²¹

In the case of many "Old Field" school teachers, mere transients, not on intimate terms with great families and often regarded with suspicion as "foreigners" among the less cultured of the neighborhoods, the discomfort of the situation must have been great. In fact, Virginia before the War was not an easy place for a teacher of strict puritanic conceptions of moral discipline "to do his duty" by his pupils. Such a determination was apt to be fruitful of trouble to the poor alien who was under the misfortune of having been born without the confines of the Old Dominion. In many cases the teacher had a real grievance. There was, undoubtedly, much looseness in the moral life of the day that cried for attention in the schools. The literature of the Sunday School movement is full of the lack of discipline — even distressing moral depravity of both children and parents of the poorer classes — and the general looseness of family self-government in the homes of the better classes. The young Virginian destined for social leadership is said to have been often "more

²⁰ Fithian, *op. cit.*, 236, 288, 296, *passim*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63. Even the stately minuet was a stumbling block, for he says: "After the scholars had their Lesson, Mr. Christian very politely requested me to step a *Minuet*; I excused myself, however, but signified my peculiar pleasure in the accuracy of their performance."

devoted to Hoyle than to Euclid." At any rate, we are told on good authority that Virginia youth chafed under strict discipline, and his elders frequently sided with him. In fact, the distinguished Dr. John Holt Rice is led to write in 1825: "It is exceedingly rare to find a parent sufficiently wise and impartial to take the part of the teacher [in a case of discipline] . . . indeed, the dependence of teachers on the favor of parents is so absolute at most institutions, they are under strong temptation to be on *good terms* with the parents . . . [otherwise] the result is often bitter and active hostility."²²

The professional training of teachers was slowly evolved in all the American states. As early as 1823 Samuel R. Hall attempted a training class for teachers at Concord, Massachusetts, and in 1826 James G. Carter, of the same state, published his "Outlines of an Institute for the Education of the Teacher," which led to the experiments at Lexington and Bridgewater, in Massachusetts. In 1825 President Philip Lindsley, of the University of Tennessee, advocated seminaries for the training of teachers; but little was actually accomplished in the United States for a generation or more. In Virginia Governor Thomas N. Randolph, in the second year of the primary school law, 1820, included in his message to the legislature: "A great improvement would be felt if no teacher were allowed fees from the public until he had previously undergone an examination and received a license from the University. Furthermore, it would be well if the county court would select young men for gratuitous education at the University." No mention, however, is made of training or qualifications of teachers in any of the early statutes — except in such occasional and indefinite terms as those used in the special Act of 1808 establishing schools on the confiscated glebe of King George County, requiring teachers to show "satisfactory evidence of their qualifications and morality."²³ In section III, of the Act of 1829, commissioners could "give \$100 for teachers who have been properly examined," but no specific, authoritative plan was offered. Moreover, the act remained a dead letter.

The lack of systematic supervision of teachers and the

²² *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, IX, 351.

²³ *House Journal*, 1808, 21, 51. *Acts of Assembly*, Jan. 1, 1808.

absence of "quarterly examination of pupils" are given by many writers as contributory causes of poor teaching in Virginia. A Virginia gentleman, in describing his journey in New England, notes that in Boston the committeemen visit the schools every two or three months, examine the pupils on the subjects prescribed, and lay the results of the examinations before the public.

"Teachers and pupils begin each quarter with the expectation that at the close of the quarter their conduct and progress will be brought under review. . . . This has a powerful effect . . . and it furnishes in part a solution of the question why primary schools have been hitherto so inefficient in Virginia."²⁴

Under the Virginia system, he argues, a poor child might go to school three to six months with such regularity as he chose and the Virginia public must be satisfied with the teacher's fee bill as the only evidence that he had done his work. The child may have made rapid progress or none at all.

Popular indifference to education also tended, according to other interested observers, to discourage good men from entering so disreputable and poorly paid a field. To still others the precariousness of the profession was a more fundamental cause. The scattered character of the population and the consequent rapid change in the centers of school population made for what a contemporary critic aptly termed the "ambulatory" school — one that moved as the population changed, or when adversity visited the community. The conditions which created the ambulatory school were the conditions which lay back of the failure of the district school system of 1829, i.e., changes of population making permanent school buildings impossible to many large areas in both the eastern and western sections of the state. Still more fundamentally, Virginia was, as she is now to some extent, under the economic burden of the one-crop system. She was wealthy or poor with the fluctuation in price of tobacco, wheat, or corn; independent only in those years in which prices made it possible for producers to go from one year's crop to the next without borrowing on futures. If

²⁴ "H." — A Journey in New England, *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, July 10, 1822, VI, 86.

the crops failed or prices were low so that products barely defrayed the expenses of cultivation, the school and school-master were the first to suffer. During hard times, we are told, "English schools and academies stood idle for several years at a time in erstwhile prosperous districts; while the teachers were thrown upon their own resources."²⁵

The teaching methods commonly employed in the primary school were often a source of community feeling against the teacher. It will be recalled that one of the chief causes for the widespread popularity of the Sunday schools was its new emphasis on rational methods in teaching and its new appeal to the instinctive interests of children. A very general reaction against memoriter methods and harsh discipline is registered by many thoughtful contributors to magazines and newspapers from all parts of the state. There are even flashes of evidence that such writers realized the incompatibility of the new democracy and these methods borrowed from medieval schools. An earnest citizen, endeavoring to show that the main difficulty in obtaining *good* schools and diffusing an interest in the arts and sciences is due to harsh discipline and poor methods of teaching, exclaims:

"What is learned is learned in parrot fashion and is recited mechanically. . . . Hence most young ones go to the school when they *must*; escape when they *can* and finally *leave* it with stubborn resolution to have as little to do with books as possible."²⁶

Two newspaper editorials are typical of this well-defined intellectual protest against prevailing methods in the lower schools and the academies. The Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald*, November 28, 1830, contains a sarcastic editorial under the caption, "Note on the Pleasures of School":

"What are the beatitudes of a scholastic paradise? To be fagged, flogged, thumped, and coerced to mental labor and constrained in personal liberty. This may be all very proper and salutary (so is physic) but it is not happiness, and there is very, very rarely an instance of a boy, while he is in one of these prisons of the body, and treadmills of the mind, who is not always wishing to get out of school and to get home."

And an editorial in the Portsmouth *Old Dominion*, July 15, 1840, gives a very significant presentation of the doctrine

²⁵ "Philodemus," *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, IX, 137.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, IX, 136. Cf. section of Dr. B. M. Smith's Report of Prussian Primary Schools, dealing with class-room method, on page 118 of this study.

of "interest" and "use" as an antidote for the current "Pleasures of School":

"The memory of the pupil is burdened beyond what the understanding apprehends — a useless storing up of unmeaning facts. All the intellectual powers should be exercised, strengthened and improved in harmony. There is too little effort made to excite a spirit of inquiry and to arouse the energies of the mind; everything now proceeds on dull routine which gives the pupil a distaste for school and makes him disinclined to the pursuit of knowledge. . . . Let the instruction communicated be adapted to the juvenile capacity of the pupil . . . and in a manner calculated to interest him."

A visitor to an academy which apparently had incorporated Pestalozzian methods proposes better class-room methods as a sound basis for school development:

"This old and stupid and sterilizing system [that of learning by rote] is ever yet the lever of Archimedes with vulgar minds. . . . It is the hammering system. You can hear its clatter and noise in every prototype of antiquity which clings to the ancient order of things in spite of the march of mind. Nor is it only in the old field schools that the dull, hard lesson is crammed down word by word until the student, like Byron, contracts a hatred for his Horace. The odious system is even now entitled to its *monstrous de droil* in some of the courts of the literati of the country. . . . Such is not the case in Rumford Academy! . . . Here the student becomes in idea the inhabitant of Greece and Rome and his knowledge of ancient literature is based on a critical knowledge of everything relating to the moral, religious, political and national character of those master spirits of the olden time."²⁷

The superintendent of the Literary Fund, James Brown, Jr., showed during this period considerably more professional spirit and knowledge of current literature and school progress in other states than many state superintendents of a later day. Satisfied apparently that success of public education in Virginia lay in the improvement and expansion of the existing system rather than through radical change by legislation, he began a crusade in 1830 for better teachers and better methods of teaching; for uniform textbooks and a greater local interest in *public* schools. In this he reflected the national movement for common schools and led no mean movement within the state for popular education. His chief effort was put in stimulating his county commissioners to greater interest and greater energy. His method consisted in

²⁷ "Visitor," *Richmond Enquirer*, Nov. 1, 1833. This was Rumford Academy, located in King William County.

repeatedly asking his commissioners pointed questions as to their practices and needs. Answers to these questions from all parts of the state were abstracted and published with the proceedings of the General Assembly after being laid before that body as part of the superintendent's annual report. By 1834 ten counties report that some form of certification and examinations is in force. The counties of Charles City, Charlotte, Franklin, New Kent, Pocahontas, Washington, Southampton, and Smythe are reported as those examining their teachers. Pittsylvania is "gratified to state that the results of some of their labors have terminated in turning out from the primary schools young gentlemen who have taken charge of schools and also other important departments in science, morals and religion." In the same year, in his attempt to gain some degree of uniformity in practice, Brown receives and publishes by counties the titles of all textbooks used in each subject throughout the state.²⁸ In 1835 he admonishes his commissioners: "Teachers of proper qualifications and good character should always be selected. . . . For this system they should be proficient in reading, writing, and cyphering."

The efforts of the superintendent of the Literary Fund to improve the common schools were supplemented quite generally, as has been already indicated, by the newspapers and by many lyceums. But a most conspicuous service to the state was given by a group of academy and college teachers and friends under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. Jonathan P. Cushing, president of Hampden-Sidney, a Presbyterian college in Prince Edward County. Dr. Cushing,

²⁸ The Second Auditor apparently continues this work by annual questionnaires to the commissioners. In 1845 the returns show the following uniformity among the schools of the state, the numerals indicating the number of counties reporting a text: PRIMERS: The American, 19, New York, 4; SPELLERS, Webster's, 49, Comley's, 23, Eclectic, 17, etc.; GRAMMARS, Murray's, 30, Smith's, 25, Kirkham's, 15, etc.; ARITHMETICS, Pike's, 63, Smith's 22, Jesse's, 12, Davie's, 4, etc.; GEOGRAPHY, Onley's, 36, Parley's, 12, Mitchell's, 12, etc.; U. S. HISTORY, Grimshaw's, 8; EUROPEAN HISTORY, Grimshaw's; READERS, The Bible and New Testament, 53, the English Reader, 51, the New York Readers, I, II, III, 50, Parley's works, 19, and twenty other different texts. In this list, Arithmetic, Reading, Spelling, Grammar and, perhaps, Geography, appear with greatest frequency. The Bible was the most popular reader. Comstock's Natural Philosophy and Chemistry, Day's Algebra, Gallaudet's Natural Theology, and Gibson's Surveyor are listed for one county each. *House Journal*, 1845-6, Document No. 4, 41.

according to his biographer,²⁹ was a close student of the Virginia charity school system and "exerted himself on all occasions to watch its pernicious effects and to endeavor to reorganize the whole system. As a valuable instrument for effecting this grand object, he succeeded in establishing a society or Institute of Education which through its orators and essayists at college commencements endeavored to arouse the people from their lethargy upon the subject of common schools . . . and to lay bare the root of the evil — inefficient teachers — and show how it might be removed." This movement seems to have followed very closely the establishment of the American Institute of Instruction, the first meeting of which was held in Boston, August 19-22, 1830, with delegates from eleven states present.³⁰

The first session of the Virginia Institute met at Hampden-Sidney, September 29, 1831,³¹ to inquire into the state of the lower schools. A permanent organization was effected as a result of this meeting; at a second conference, September 27, 1832, the query, "Is there no room for improvement of common school education in Virginia?" was the chief topic for discussion. At a third meeting "alarming reports of the real state of education" were given, but some "cheering facts" reported regarding "the permanency of native teachers" and the opportunity for female education. An address on the "Advantages of Associations for the Promotion of Education" by Hon. J. M. Garnett, of Essex, so impressed this institute that it was ordered printed and distributed through the state.³²

²⁹ *Vide* "Memoirs of Jonathan P. Cushing," *Quarterly Register*, American Educational Society, 1838, 119. Rev. Dr. Cushing, a Presbyterian minister, came to Virginia from New Hampshire in 1871. In 1819 he became a professor, and from 1821-35 was president of Hampden-Sidney College.

³⁰ Barnard, *American Journal of Education*, 1856, II, 19-33, 241-55. It appears from the proceedings of the American Institute of Instruction for 1831 that Thomas S. Grimke, Charleston, S.C., Philip Lindsley, president of the University of Tennessee, Alva Woods, president of University of Alabama, and William Wirt, Baltimore, Md., were among the first vice-presidents. Oliver A. Shaw, of Richmond, Va., was one of the first counselors and an active participant in a business meeting and debate of the institute. In 1831 "Mr. Shaw gave a lecture on Arithmetic in connection with an exhibition and explanation of his Visible Numerator." *Vide* *Proceedings*, American Institute of Instruction, I, xviii.

³¹ *Norfolk Herald*, Nov. 8, 1831; Barnard, *Educational Associations*, 809. Contemporaneous with the Virginia Institute, Florida, 1830; Louisiana, 1831; Tennessee, 1831; North Carolina, 1831; Georgia, 1831; organized institutes of similar character.

³² *Vide* writer's *Elementary Education in Virginia during Early Nineteenth Century*, 1911, Columbia University Library.

Although Virginia had never made provision for training teachers, many individual citizens made diagnoses of the state's need and proposed numerous solutions for the difficulty. It has already been noted that beginning with Jefferson's first bills, state scholarships at the academies and the University were urged as a means of furnishing state leadership for public service from among the poor. In 1820 Governor Thomas N. Randolph pointed out to the legislature, in his annual message, the necessity of training teachers at public expense.³³ Ex-Governor James Barbour draws our attention in 1836 to the fact that at the creation of the Literary Fund free scholarships at the prospective university were pledged — one for each senatorial district — "before the free school party consented to the idea of an university."³⁴ Mercer tells us that attempts were made in the struggle of 1815-16 to imitate France in giving "gratuitous instruction to candidates for the office of teachers who should be given a fixed but liberal compensation for the instruction of their successors." At this time, Mercer says, it was felt by some that the monitorial system furnished "the best imaginable mode of creating valuable teachers."³⁵ Others pressed the claim, we are told, of the scheme inaugurated by Felbiger in Silesia under the auspices of Frederick William and still others of the Prussian teacher-training classes.

Dr. Benjamin H. Smith, in 1838 (*vide* p. 131), reviewing the Prussian school system, raises the question: "Can you expect a man with iron hand and wooden brains to successfully train your children?" He recommends that the state create a normal department in each of the colleges of the state and that a special department for the training of Latin or high school teachers be established at the University of Virginia.³⁶ In outlining the actual instruction in the Prussian primary schools in the first class, comprising children under eight years of age, at the Francke School in Halle, he says:

"The teacher's object is to teach the children to *think*. He uses no book, asking them the simplest questions on objects around them. . . .

³³ *House Journal*, 1820, 7.

³⁴ *Farmer's Register*, 1836, 685.

³⁵ Mercer, *op. cit.*, 70.

³⁶ *House Journal*, 1839, Document No. 26. Discussed in the succeeding chapter of this study, also in writer's *Elementary Education in Virginia during Early Nineteenth Century*, 1911.

He then exercises their powers of perception. READING: Instead of a memoriter process of teaching the alphabet and the slow, tedious spelling lesson, the teacher exercises the vocal organs on certain sounds. With each sound is associated the *form* of the letter which represents it. All elementary sounds are thus taught before the *names* of the letter, and thus a distinction is drawn between the *power* and the *name*. . . . ARITHMETIC: The simplest elements of this science are taught by means of objects. . . . After the pupils have been taught to count, the simplest processes of addition and subtraction are made perfectly familiar by the illustrations which their own persons or the furniture of the room afford. Multiplication and division succeed on the same plan. Instead of advancing to the other arithmetical principles, these are carried out by increasing the numbers in the various combinations, till they not only learn the multiplication table, but can, with facility, add any amount *which may occur in the ordinary concerns of life*.³⁷ . . . GEOMETRY is taught in the second class. The first lessons are mere explanations of geometrical forms and terms for which a full supply of cards, painted, and lithographed figures of squares, is required, together with wooden models of solids."

Even in the absence of training classes for teachers, sporadic efforts were made to improve methods of teaching. Lancastrianism had been seized upon with this hope but was found only practicable in the towns and was finally given up altogether because this hope failed. As a stimulant to the Normal School movement, the philosophy of Pestalozzi was felt at several diverse points in Virginia, at a very early period; so early, in fact, as to indicate that its influence was direct from Yverdun and not through England or the textbooks of the Northern states. At this point J. C. Cabell, so prominent in his championship of the University forces in the legislature, 1815-25, made a less known contribution to primary educational progress.³⁸ As early as 1824 he reports on the success of Pestalozzian methods in use in the Literary Fund schools of his home county of Nelson. Mr. Cabell's health compelled him to wander through Europe from 1803 to 1806. He tells us that he spent most of his time in desultory study and observation. It seems that he became acquainted with the Philadelphia Scotch philanthropist, William McClure, and accompanied him on his second visit (1805) to Pestalozzi's school at Yverdun.³⁹ This

³⁷ He cites "the books of Emerson, Colburn, and particularly Smith, as illustrations of the course alluded to." Italicis mine except on *think*.

³⁸ So far as I know no one has heretofore made any reference to this interesting fact. *Vide* writer's *Elementary Education in Virginia during Early Nineteenth Century*, 1911.

³⁹ Mr. McClure was accompanied by "C. Cabell, a brother of the Governor of Virginia. . . . They were soon convinced of the solidity, importance and use-

visit and other observations made him a friend of education from the time he entered the General Assembly in 1809. In the Auditor's report for 1824 Mr. Cabell, who was the clerk of the Nelson County Board of School Commissioners, reports for his board and sets forth arguments "for the introduction of 'mental' arithmetic as taught by Pestalozzi." The teachers of Nelson were evidently familiar with Pestalozzian methods. Eleven of them, after proper instruction, had tried the new arithmetic and, in a statement to their board, pronounced it a success. So enthusiastic is Cabell that we quote him in part:

"It is a sure cure for the miserable conditions most of our schools have fallen into . . . it gives new interest to the important subject of Arithmetic. The new system has been adopted by the WHOLE of our public schools, and from present indications, it promises in the course of another year to become the exclusive and universal method."⁴⁰

This is novel evidence from a mountain county of Virginia. Yet, in 1829, another mountain county (Washington), far removed from Nelson, made a recommendation equally striking. In discussing the Act of 1829, the Washington commissioners point out two difficulties in the way of inaugurating the new district system — insufficient financial aid from the state and an inadequate supply of qualified, native teachers. To remove the second difficulty, they offered the following suggestion:

"To effect this important step, this Board would humbly suggest that the General Assembly of Virginia authorize a school to be established in each county on the plan of Pestalozzi for the education of young men as teachers."⁴¹

This interest in Pestalozzianism had already led some unknown gentleman of Lynchburgh — in the county adjoining Nelson just cited — to send a memorial to the legislature praying for the establishment of a Fellenberg School at the state penitentiary as a state experiment. The author of the

fulness of the Pestalozzian system." Will S. Monroe, Pestalozzianism in America. It is commonly held that Pestalozzianism reached America through two main channels: (1) at Philadelphia, 1812, through the philanthropy of Mr. McClure, who financed Neef; (2) through Dr. E. A. Sheldon's training school at Oswego, N.Y., 1862, with Miss Jones, an English Pestalozzian teacher and Herman Krusi, a pupil of Pestalozzi at Yverdun. The latter movement, through its teachers soon spread more rapidly than the earlier experiments of Neef.

⁴⁰ *House Journal*, 1825-6, Second Auditor's Report, Nelson County.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1830, Washington County.

memorial sees a relief from the evils of charity education in the plan of Fellenberg; and in uniting industrial training with school instruction, an impetus to popular education.

"Mankind is not aware of the influence of *habit* on the juvenile mind . . . where less is expended on education more is expended on officers, whipping-posts, etc. . . . We hope the time is not far distant when we shall have a State Model School established to which our citizens may look for an improved and rational system of public instruction."⁴²

At least one scheme for the improvement of county schools and teachers was inspired by the lyceum movement, by the crusade for scientific farming and the betterment of farm life which characterized Virginia in the late 1830's. The plan appears over the name of J. Holbrook,⁴³ in the *Portsmouth Old Dominion*, for September 14, 1839, and is worth presenting here in digest:

"Men of high attainments cannot be obtained in schools at \$25 per month. No teachers can be retained in the Common Schools till well-paid and till the profession stands as high as medicine. . . . Three-fourths of the children are farmers' children and the system best fitted to farmers is the system for the country. Therefore, a scientific farmer should teach the neighborhood school for four months in winter [when the boys would attend]; and his wife or daughter, the summer months, [when the girls and small children would attend] as it has been demonstrated that women are best adapted to teach the very young. As teachers these would be far superior to the transient youth who uses teaching as a *cat's-paw* to aid him to another profession. The establishment of such a system would cause teaching to become a profession. Resident teachers would act from higher motives than interlopers from other sections, and, by reason of their practicality, would be better qualified than teachers specially trained but removed from the real life the children are to enter."

The writer would have a happy admixture of theory and practice. Not unmindful of theory, he advocates "a system of lyceums" — to be held weekly or semi-monthly in every community — where the farmer-teachers and their lady assistants could hear great teachers and see the sciences demonstrated with scientific apparatus. "Here young ladies and

⁴² "Alpha," *Lynchburg Virginian*, March 5, 1824. Editors of *Richmond Enquirer* and *Constitutional Whig* were requested to copy this article.

⁴³ This is probably Josiah Holbrook of Connecticut, prominent in the American Lyceum movement, a sketch of whose life appears in Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, VIII, 1860, 229-47. "His main object was the establishment, throughout the United States, of popular associations for the diffusion of scientific knowledge connected with the useful arts . . . organizing mechanics and farmers in weekly evening classes." The last years of Holbrook's life were spent in stimulating educational interest in the rural districts of Virginia.

gentlemen could become familiar with method and qualify themselves by a course of reading." He cites three great advantages of such a plan: *first*, a good farmer-teacher could be obtained for a salary upon which an outsider could not support himself; *second*, it would tend to raise teaching to the dignity of a profession; *third*, from an agricultural standpoint, it would combine experimental knowledge with theory. Mr. Holbrook's scheme was another plea for a practical school and qualified teachers, and there are evidences that towards the close of the period a modification of the scheme was in practice in some rural localities.

In a Memorial from the Rockbridge Agricultural Society, 1840, Henry Ruffner, Francis H. Smith, and J. D. Ewing presented a plan for a state normal school of one hundred pupils under the direction of a principal and three tutors. The original cost in buildings was estimated at \$12,000; the annual cost of maintenance, including salaries, board, washing, books, fuel, etc., for all students, at \$13,000; each student should "serve the state as a teacher five years, in consideration of the expense of his education."⁴⁴

The governor's committee, appointed in March, 1841, to devise a school system for consideration by the legislature, reported "that the greatest obstacle to education in Virginia is the want of well-educated and moral teachers." It suggested that either "a great normal school be established" or that departments for instruction in the art of teaching "be maintained in certain academies and colleges where students who would pledge to teach in the common schools upon graduation would be given state scholarships."⁴⁵ The Clarksburg Educational Convention, November 9, 1841, held⁴⁶ that normal schools are the first step toward the perfection of a school system. It urged one central state normal school or one for each senatorial district. The latter was held preferable, for the neighborhood schools might serve as practice schools and the best methods would the sooner be brought home to them. The convention committee, too, advocated state subsidy of departments of education in private academies and colleges. As a very happy thought this committee suggested that

⁴⁴ *House Journal*, 1841-2, Document 53.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Minutes reprinted with Second Auditor's Report, *House Journal*, 1842.

Congress, then disposing of the "Smithsonian legacy left the United States for the diffusing of knowledge, might fulfill the highest hope of Mr. Smithson" by founding normal schools. The minority report of the committee on primary schools of the Richmond Educational Convention of 1845, centers its objection to the prevailing primary system in the fact that "it makes no provision for the examination of teachers . . . it embraces no provision for the education of teachers."

The agitation for better teachers and the numerous suggestions for normal schools, county training classes, and practice schools bore little fruit before the Civil War. Randolph-Macon College, in 1839, attempted to create a department of education for the training of common school teachers.⁴⁷ Nothing came of it. But under an act of March, 1842, permitting the Virginia Military Institute to share the Literary Fund revenue, that institution received state scholars who in lieu of their tuition pledged themselves to teach in the schools in the state. This was the final acceptance of the plan urged by C. F. Mercer, in 1815-16, suggested by Jefferson before him, and recommended by Dr. B. M. Smith in 1838 and by the Governor's legislative committee in 1841. In spite of these various suggestions there is no evidence that the "state students" at the Institute were given any direct professional training in any branch of pedagogy. Superintendent Francis H. Smith simply states, in 1843 — in what Thomas Ritchie was pleased to call "a brilliant report," — that "many graduates from this school are fully engaged in instruction in our academies and primary schools and have in every case given great satisfaction. The academies in Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, and Winchester are supplied with them and others are teaching in Amherst, Buckingham, Gloucester, Roanoke, Botetourt and Rockbridge."⁴⁸

More than twenty years afterwards Superintendent Smith said, in an annual report, "If we contemplate the work of the Virginia Military Institute as a normal school the results may be seen in no doubtful light. . . . Our first teachers

⁴⁷ Adams, Herbert B., Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia, 244.

⁴⁸ Richmond *Enquirer*, Feb. 1, 1844. Annual Report, Superintendent, V. M. I., 1843.

went to work in 1843, at a time when it was regarded as unworthy for a young Virginian to engage in the profession of teaching.”⁴⁹ These young teachers, with their scientific interest and practical training, were a new element in the schools of the state. They helped stimulate, according to General Smith, the industrial classes and practical interests which the mechanic’s institutes and lyceums were inadequately prepared to meet. This supply of native teachers, however, was small and went chiefly to the higher schools.

When, in 1844, the General Assembly cited the University of Virginia to show cause why its annuity should not be devoted to *common school extension*, the trustees of that institution insisted that each academy founded by such of their alumni as “Powers, Tutwiler, Maupin, Coleman, Harrison, Davis, Bushnell, Barksdale, Galt, Slaughter, McKee, Turner, Saunders, etc., has become a *Normal School* for an extensive neighborhood,—destined by its example and by the teachers it sends forth to banish from the inferior schools the ignorant pretension which has heretofore so generally occupied the chair of instruction; and to supply in its place the clear and really profitable teachings of men trained to accurate knowledge and enlightened method.”⁵⁰

For many years attempts were made to arouse interest in “female education.” After the Revolution a number of seminaries for girls were established. James Mercer Garnett was one of the earliest advocates in this cause. By 1850 many women teachers are referred to in the schools supported by state funds. In a memorial, 1850, to the legislature, the trustees of the Fredericksburg Southern Female Institute ask for incorporation and for a state appropriation, saying:

“If the encouragement given . . . the education of young men has been so blessed, will not the present legislature [approve] this first effort to raise upon our soil the standard of female education? . . . We offer in exchange the valuable consideration of instructing one young lady from each senatorial district for a teacher. By this arrangement the pressing demand which has been so long made in vain for competent Southern teachers would soon be abundantly supplied. . . . One reason why the young women of Virginia have not hitherto devoted themselves to teaching is that they have not enjoyed opportunities of thoroughly preparing themselves for that responsible office . . . and therefore, says one of the ablest

⁴⁹ House Documents, 1868. Report, Gen. F. H. Smith, Supt., V. M. I., 1867.

⁵⁰ *House Journal*, 1845-46, Document No. 15, 42.

women of this generation, 'a college expressly to teach women the art of teaching would be a most useful institution.'"⁵¹

An attempt has been made in this chapter to indicate through contemporary evidence the extent to which the prevailing type of elementary teacher disturbed the public mind and retarded the growth of popular schools. We have seen how widely the defects of the common schools were attributed to the indifferent character and qualifications of the teachers. That there was an increase in native teachers in the East in the last decades of the ante-bellum period there is little doubt; still the "Yankee" teacher persisted. Many of the best teachers in the colleges, academies, and lower schools came out of Northern colleges; some of them later served in the Confederate army. In the lower schools, however, teachers were too generally transients and were, therefore, often subjects of ridicule and suspicion. As the feeling against the abolition movement became more and more bitter this outsider often represented a sinister influence and many communities discovered that their suspicion was well founded. A number of statutes of this period indicate how frequently these teachers were found to be colporteurs in the service of the anti-slavery propaganda. The success of popular education waited upon the rise of a native teaching class in whose social ideals and class-room methods the country people would repose confidence.

⁵¹ *House Journal*, 1850-1, Document No. 29, signed by B. R. Wellford and F. Slaughter, president and secretary of the Board of Trustees. In 1887 the State Female Normal School at Farmville was inaugurated on this plan.

CHAPTER IX

VIRGINIA'S PART IN THE NATIONAL COMMON SCHOOL REVIVAL, 1840-60. A WIDESPREAD POPULAR MOVEMENT FOR PUB- LIC EDUCATION

ONE of the interesting impressions a reader of Virginia historical source material receives is that of the apparent neglect of internal state problems for the great national issues under discussion in Washington. The more prominent Virginia newspapers printed the proceedings of Congress in as much detail as those of their own state legislature. In the libraries, still intact, of great ante-bellum houses one may expect to find the Congressional Record complete. Private letters of the ante-bellum period show a keen concern over local congressional elections, an interest one does not find in more modern correspondence, even among public men. There is no doubt that the average educated Virginian took national politics seriously.

One may, perhaps, find the explanation for this devotion to national politics in the peculiar genius Virginia had shown for leadership in the formation of the Union and in her large share in its success. The colonial gentleman, freed from the details and the manual labor of his estate by many slaves, had early interested himself in English politics and, according to Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, was usually familiar with the political theories of Sidney, Montesquieu, Locke, etc. Virginia youth were accustomed to hear their elders discuss great issues. This was one of the benefits of the tutorial system which united pupils, tutor, parents, and visitors during long winter evenings and at meal times.

There can be no doubt that after 1825 the fundamental cause upon which this interest turned was economic. Slave-holders were quite naturally interested in their property.¹

¹ The earnest effort of many early Virginia leaders to abolish slavery is a commonplace fact to students of American history. A bill for the manumission and education of the negro is one of the forgotten provisions of Jefferson's first con-

An emotional anti-slavery propaganda, an occasional agrarian attack on property by some half dozen radical newspapers² in Northern cities, and the disputed right to slaves in the western territories, finally came to overshadow such state questions as trans-Alleghany land titles, new waterways, and the extension of popular education. Particularly was this true when these questions involved sharp conflicts of interest between the various sections and a vigorous abolition sentiment within the state itself. These national and state sectional differences became acute in Virginia at just the time when the nonslaveholding states were rapidly evolving the free school idea — that is, from 1840 to 1860, the period following the rise of democracy under the Jacksonian régime and characterized in Massachusetts by the campaign of James G. Carter and Horace Mann, in Connecticut by that of Henry Barnard, and in New York by that of David B. Page.³

In spite of these handicaps, Virginia moved rapidly toward a state system of free schools. In fact, from 1839-49, it may be said to have carried on a campaign comparable to, often exceeding in intensity, the great movements in the other states. This period can hardly be called a revival, as the intelligent leadership of the state had been upon the side of popular education since the days of the Mercer-Jefferson contest of 1815-18. There were no protests from responsible men against education at any time; division came over the principle of administration and the best means of dispelling ignorance and apathy. With all that has been said of property's defense against "wild democracy's" empty pocket-book, Virginia was,

stitution. Charles Fenton Mercer was an active president of the American Colonization Society. Under the inspiration of Professors St. George Tucker and George Wythe, students at William and Mary and scions of the best families of the state advocated freedom for slaves in their literary societies and even petitioned the legislature for an adjudication of the question. President Lyon G. Tyler points out the existence in the South in 1825 of "some three hundred societies bottomed upon a moral dissatisfaction with the institution of slavery." Attempts to justify it came as a natural reaction to agitation under Garrison. *Vide* College of William and Mary: its History and Work, 79; also Mumford, B.B., Virginia's Attitude toward Slavery and Secession.

² *Southern Review*, VI, 1-31.

³ Massachusetts created a state board, but no state superintendent in 1837; Rhode Island created a commissioner of school funds and superintendent of common schools in 1842, and in 1849 founded a normal school, making its principal state superintendent as well. In 1845, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire created the office of state superintendent of schools. New York created this office as early as 1812, but revoked the act in 1821.

perhaps, as much marked by fervid oratory in behalf of public schools, by the number of local and state conventions and aggressive campaigns for free schools, as was Massachusetts or New York at this notable period. Although it produced a host of leaders, it did not, however, produce a Horace Mann of single purpose and self-sacrificing mission who could force a state thus torn by sectionalism to come together on a common plan. Jefferson had appeared too early in political evolution to effect the culmination of his hopes within his own lifetime.

The best newspapers and periodicals of both political parties in the East and the West published many letters and whole-hearted editorials on the need of common free schools. Thomas Ritchie, of the Richmond *Enquirer*, had championed the cause since he assumed the editorship of that paper in 1804. *The Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, under the editorship of Reverend John Holt Rice, had been a large contributing influence in the success of the academy subsidy and in exposing the injustice of the Act of 1818. Virginia's proudest and most exclusive literary venture, *The Southern Literary Messenger*, contains many educational discussions,⁴ and one of its editors, John R. Thompson, was a lyceum lecturer on popular education. Many lyceums, then popular in the state, devoted sessions to the cause of public education. A Portsmouth paper praises an address by one Theophilus Fiske before the lyceum of that city.⁵ The Richmond *Whig* "observes that the public mind is beginning to take interest in the all important subject. . . . Meetings to consider the best system for the education of all the children of the commonwealth have been held in Danville, Lynchburg, and in Powhatan and King and Queen counties."⁶

This spirit among the best people, Governor David Campbell represented when in his 1839 message to the legislature he

⁴ *Southern Literary Messenger*, I, 725-35; II, 436, 477, 561, 613; VII, 631; XIII, 685; XIV, 597; XX, 65; XXIV, 161, 241, 401; XXV, 55, 62, 131, 133. Unfortunately, this magazine in 1840 in order to reserve its purely literary character, excluded all lyceum and convention addresses. In Feb. 1842, however, the *Messenger* says it relaxed its rule against publishing addresses "to publish that of James Mercer Garnett's on *Popular Education* on account of the importance of the subject and the sound views and just opinions," etc. By unanimous vote of the first Richmond convention, Dec. 9, 1841, this address was ordered published and the *Messenger* was chosen as the medium.

⁵ Portsmouth *Old Dominion*, Sept. 21, 1839.

⁶ The Richmond *Whig*, Sept. 27, 1839,—political opponent of Ritchie's *Enquirer*.

urged reorganization of education as the state's "first, great, and imperative duty," pointing out the presence of 200,000 children between five and fifteen years, and the necessity of caring for 60,000 children excluded from school under the poor law. The present system was, he said, "both defective in its results and imperfectly executed."

In the absence of adequate data for determining illiteracy, Governor Campbell used the number of those who, in ninety-three counties, could not write their names on marriage licenses⁷ and found that in the twenty years of the primary system the percentage of illiteracy had remained stationary. Aroused by these facts and in the efforts to fulfill his pledges of the election campaign, he appealed for a state appropriation of \$200,000 to be added to the Literary Fund income and for a general levy for the establishment and maintenance of 8000 schools and the employment of 4000 teachers. At first, it was suggested, one teacher might divide his time between two schools. In urging the levy he held that "a school established and maintained by both public and private contributions would be better managed and better attended" than if maintained exclusively by public bounty. Under a coöperative community plan citizens might contribute a small part toward the education of their children and escape the ignominy of charity.

The session of the Assembly to which Governor Campbell addressed this message, 1839-40, is notable for a number of plans, reports, and resolutions.⁸ "A Plan of a Citizen" was presented by John Tyler, submitting the question of "Tax or No Tax" for schools to popular vote. Mr. Coleman called up a bill for a District School system. None of them, it seems, was enacted.

In response to Governor Campbell's request by letter of September 4, 1838, Benjamin M. Smith⁹ submitted certain

⁷ Governor's Message, *House Journal*, Jan. 7, 1839.

In 1818—4682 applied and 1127 could not write their names.

In 1827—5088 " " 1167 " " " " "

In 1837—4614 " " 1048 " " " " "

⁸ *House Journal*, 1839-40, School Bills No. 10, 15, 249, *et al.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1839, Document No. 26. Benjamin M. Smith, Danville, Va., Jan. 1 and 15, 1839. He was prominent in the common school movement and with Scott and Ritchie wrote the Primary School Memorial of the Educational Convention, Richmond, 1841.

“observations on the systems of education pursued in some European countries [which] may be useful to the General Assembly of our own state,” a Report on the Prussian Primary School System and a supplement, “Suggestions on the Application of this System of Primary Schools to Virginia.” He tells us that while in Prussia he “resided mostly in Halle, a city celebrated for the location of the orphan house, established by Francke in 1694-8.” He bases his report on “notes taken on the spot and the observations of others under similar circumstances, particularly Professor Stowe of Cincinnati,” who made his report on this subject to the Ohio legislature in 1837. Dr. Smith’s report is, perhaps, the most significant document of the period and deserves to rank with the early American reports on the European school systems.¹⁰ It should be regarded as something more than a mere reprint of the Stowe report. “Education is more than instruction,” he says; “it is the drawing out of the mind. Memory, judgment, imagination, conception, abstraction, as well as simple perception, are called forth into vigorous exercise. While useful matter is placed before the mind, that mind is taught to *appropriate* and *use it*.”

At Governor Campbell’s specific request the following topics were discussed in the Smith report:

- (1) Mode of establishing primary schools in Prussia.
- (2) Their organization, branches taught, and the length of term.
- (3) Expense per child of such schools, and the part assumed by parent and by state.
- (4) How teachers are obtained, — their salaries, qualifications, and training.
- (5) A seminary or normal school for teachers.
- (6) Outline of course of study, with a daily program for primary grades and pertinent observations on method.
- (7) Statistics on Prussian primary schools, showing their growth and high efficiency.
- (8) Discipline and miscellaneous topics.

¹⁰ *Vide* Russell’s Education in Germany in Years 1820-21-22; Julius’ Outline of Prussian System, 1835; Victor Cousin’s State Public Education in Prussia 1836; Calvin E. Stowe’s, 1837, etc.

The report gives an excellent description of method as applied to the subjects in the grades, stressing the nonsectarian religious instruction — “historical, geographical, perceptive rather than *doctrinal*.” His great criticism of the system is “the great want of books and periodicals adapted to the popular mind . . . a popular literature.” His outline of instruction and method was given in some detail in the preceding chapter.

In the supplement Dr. Smith makes specific application of the Prussian system to Virginia conditions. “We cannot,” says he, “copy such a monarchical system, but we can catch certain principles for application in a republic.” The first of these principles is that education is a state and parental duty, that nothing will so promote public welfare as will education of the masses. Second, the principle of general taxation for schools, and the error in branding as a “pauper” a child who does not pay for its education. “We must see that education is a public benefit and tax ourselves for it.” Third, Prussian success is largely due to trained teachers. A normal department should be established at each college and a special department at the University of Virginia for the training of “Latin School” or high school teachers. Such teachers would pledge themselves to teach in Virginia after graduation in lieu of their tuition. “We should welcome teachers if they come from China so that they serve the state and *STAY WITH US*.” Fourth, we might imitate the superior machinery of the Prussian schools. Fifth, more science, civil government, and good citizenship, drawing, and agriculture should be introduced. Finally, he demonstrates the practical necessity of having a *free* system from primary to university for every child. “The true greatness of a people does not consist in borrowing nothing from others, but in borrowing from all whatever is good, and in perfecting whatever it appropriates.”

But the great and convincing data in favor of immediate action for common schools came in the educational statistics of the United States census of 1840. It stung the pride of Virginians by placing in bold relief the state’s illiteracy, and stirred a new and greater effort for common school legislation of the character that all the Northern and Western states were then contending for. The trans-Alleghany sections took the

leadership in this renaissance, but the impulse was felt throughout the state. A storm of protest arose in the Clarksburg (now West Virginia) Educational Convention, 1841, and the Lexington Conference, 1841, and, sweeping eastward, through meetings at practically every county courthouse, culminated in the two state educational conventions at Richmond in 1841 and 1845. Two permissive acts for the establishment of common schools, passed March 5, 1846, came out of this enthusiasm, and with them ante-bellum effort for centralized state school control may be said to have reached its highest point.

Before proceeding to these conventions, it is interesting to note just what story the school statistics of 1840 told of the two great divisions of the state:¹¹

I. *Total School Population*—276,673

	East		West	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Children from 5 to 10 yrs.	25,322	24,733	28,531	27,531
Children from 10 to 15 yrs.	22,051	21,639	23,771	22,357
Children from 15 to 20 yrs.	18,907	21,400	19,356	21,075
Total	66,280	67,772	71,658	70,963
<i>Schools</i>				
1. Number of academies and grammar schools			323	59
2. Number of primary and common schools			978	583
3. Attendance in academies, etc.			8,764	2,319
4. Attendance in primaries, etc.			20,763	14,568
5. Number over 20 who cannot read and write			29,808	28,924
6. Number of "public charges" at school			6,070	3,721

This gave Virginia 58,732 adult illiterates, about one in thirteen, evenly divided between the two great sections. New Jersey, Kentucky, and Alabama ranked above Virginia in percentage of illiteracy. North Carolina, with a district system just inaugurated, recorded one fourth of her entire adult population unlettered. Ohio and New York had 35,000 illiterates, Kentucky, 40,000, while in Massachusetts there were 4500 and in Connecticut only 526.

No one suggested, apparently, the interesting correlation between the thickly populated industrial states of many towns and villages such as Connecticut and Massachusetts with their low illiteracy rate, and the *high illiteracy* rate of the agricultural states of Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky,

¹¹ *House Journal*, 1841, Second Auditor's Report, Supplementary Document.

Alabama, etc. Of the 395,037 free adult males, white and colored in Virginia, occupations were distributed as follows:

Agriculture	318,771 or 80 per cent
Manufactory and trades	54,147 or 13 per cent
Learned professions	3,866 or 1 per cent

In the enthusiasm for education, no apology was offered on the basis of these facts, nor was Virginia popularly accredited with 1500 primary and common schools and 400 academies and grammar schools in a white population of less than 740,000, the greater part of which lived in the open country. On the other hand, the convention orators saw in the census of 1840 "a picture startling and frightful . . . which exposes our ignorance in strong and humiliating contrast with that of the other states of the confederacy."¹²

The census figures are not, however, to be taken too seriously as an arraignment in themselves of the primary school system; though they may be accepted as the index of a deplorable apathy. The school situation at that time was singularly like that which the state faced at the opening of the twentieth century, after thirty years under the Act of 1870. In 1900 there were only 6429 public school buildings for white children within the area of the present state of Virginia, in spite of the growth of towns and a great increase in population.¹³ In the same year there were 397,162 white children of school age, 241,696 of whom were enrolled and only 141,382 of whom were in average daily attendance.¹⁴ As late as 1910 only sixty-eight per cent of the white children were reported in school.¹⁵ After forty years of the present public free school system, seventy years after this census, the state superintendent confessed that twenty-three per cent of the total adult population could not read or write. In that year there were 232,911 illiterates, 83,961 of whom were native whites.¹⁶ In the state convention of 1902 the chairman of the committee on schools was forced to admit that there were thousands of white children in the state yet without school facilities.¹⁷ It has taken a highly

¹² Memorial, Richmond Educational Convention, Richmond *Enquirer*, Nov. 22, 1842.

¹³ Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, 1902, 1667, 1673; in 1860 there were 3896 schoolhouses in both states.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ U. S. Census, 1910, Virginia.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, 1902, 1222.

centralized state department of education with a corps of inspectors and campaign speakers, the persistent effort of such organizations as the Virginia Coöperative Educational Association and the local Citizens' Leagues, more than \$80,000 expended in public school wagons, and liberal state appropriation to carry the school to the people and reduce the illiteracy rate below that of 1840.

The superintendent of the Literary Fund was conscious of the need of public interest in education, of taxation for schools, and of amendments to the existing laws; but as he said in 1839, to his commissioners just before the census was made public, "A dispassionate mind cannot but see that much good has been accomplished, and diligently carried into execution. The system cannot fail to greatly advance the interests of the whole community." To him there was value, both to the rich and to the poor, in the state's having first given its exclusive attention to the education of an otherwise neglected class:

"It is a good that no other system has, that the Poor are watched over with parental care. . . . When the commissioners generally visit and inspect the schools . . . the public mind will be fully prepared for the introduction and competent support of a more perfect and general system of education. . . . Until then, let us push that now in existence to the highest degree of perfection and get all the good out of it."¹⁸

Governor Gilmer, believing the primary schools are gradually improving, advocates in his message of 1840 an extension of the present system until the necessity of education is more generally felt:

"The system will, with the help of private means, lead to schools accessible to all. . . . It is the fashion to deride our common schools without examining them. . . . The most ludicrous exaggerations have been published in other states through gross ignorance and injustice."¹⁹

The Richmond *Whig*, on the other hand, comments caustically on Brown's report of 1839, in which he showed by examples from the four sections that illiteracy was well distributed through the state: Jefferson (west), 291 adult illiterates; Gloucester (east), 600; Albemarle (central), 600; and Rockingham (Valley), 1390, with 5000 between 14 and 20 years unable to read and write!

¹⁸ *House Journal*, 1839, Second Auditor's Report.

¹⁹ *House Journal*, 1840, 7.

"Brown is wedded to the present system because it is cheap. . . . The greatest outlay may be the truest economy and that Legislature would achieve immortal honor which would boldly mortgage the revenues of the state for fifty years to come, if nothing less would do it, for the education of the Children of the Commonwealth. It is almost useless to provide a better plan until the people or the Legislature have agreed to supply the all-important prerequisite, a large sum of money. When the public mind shall be convinced of the great importance of diffusing light . . . the tax . . . will be cheerfully incurred. Of 47,000 poor children only 26,000 are sent to school at all and these often on an average of only 64 days a year."²⁰

The Abingdon *Virginian*, another Whig organ, speaking of school legislation in its issue of November 21, 1840, says:

"We should like to know what has heretofore been attempted by the legislature of 1838-9 . . . what was the cause of the failure of legislative action; and then we want our whole Legislature if they manifest any tardiness of action or seem to require it, *lashed up* by the Press and the People to efficient action. Let us not permit Federal politics to absorb our attention to the exclusion of internal improvement and education."

Thomas Ritchie heartily indorsed this editorial of a political opponent in the southwest, stating that it had been his intention to greet the legislature on its first day with an article on primary schools. When the Assembly convened, Ritchie had placed in the lobby of the capitol a district school library cabinet of one hundred volumes — a sample, he said of the 10,000 school libraries in the schools of New York State, and begged that the legislature devise a plan for the circulation of these economical libraries among the primary schools and the people of Virginia.²¹ Mr. Goode's motion in the House, February 11, 1841, to dissolve the Literary Fund and the Fund for Internal Improvement provoked Thomas Ritchie to say:

"To put out the two great eyes of the state! What! at the very moment we are reproached for the ignorance of our people, when the cant is raised about the Suabian Dutch . . . when every Patriot recognizes the sacred maxim that a Free People must be enlightened, to come forward and lay their unhallowed hands upon the Literary Fund, the only means we have of educating the poor! . . . We protest against it. If you want money . . . trust your generous constituents."²²

²⁰ The Richmond *Whig*, March, 1841.

²¹ Richmond *Enquirer*, Dec. 4, 1840. The letter from Wheeling just quoted protested against Mr. Ritchie's new enthusiasm lest it divert legislative attention and appropriation from the larger problem of free schools.

²² *Ibid.*, Editorial, Feb. 13, 1841.

The General Assembly, 1840-1, having failed to agree on a school system best adapted to the needs of the state, a bill authorizing a commission to devise such a plan for the legislature was proposed. This proposal drew out heated discussion. Mr. Burwell, of Bedford, opposed delegating legislative functions "to an irresponsible body which might attempt to press through a mere *transcript* from a system of some other state and utterly unsuited to the exigencies of the state of Virginia." In this connection he advised caution and protested that the present system of the state was misunderstood by some and deliberately misrepresented by many.

"The very sparseness of our population would show sufficiently that no system of general taxation for popular education as practised in the Northern states would be applicable here. . . . While the proportion the population of Maine or Massachusetts bears to the area is 75 to 81 per square mile, in West Virginia it is 8 and in Eastern Virginia it is about 11, thus showing that any *general system must be unequal in its benefits and operations*.

"The District System (1829) has been in optional operation for ten years and yet there are at present but four or five counties in which the system is in operation. Some counties were laid off into districts several years ago, but the system has been abandoned and the school-houses have rotted down . . . thus showing that we are not prepared for the adoption of some of the most advantageous peculiarities of the plans of education in operation elsewhere. We risked a great deal in allowing this matter to get away from the House."²³

Mr. Lee, of Harrison County, opposed Mr. Burwell, believing the present system only valuable for a "perpetuation of ignorance," and trusted that the time had arrived for more judicious expenditure of money for education. "Virginia in 1818, before this vaunted Common School System," he said, "had less ignorance than in 1840." He called upon "Friends of Education in the House to sustain the bill and come forward for the education of the People."²⁴ Such a bill was enacted March 8, 1841, authorizing the governor to select three suitable persons to "devise and report to the next legislature some school system adapted to the condition of this state." From the Literary Fund one hundred dollars was offered for the best plan of popular education submitted for the consideration of this committee.

In the following session, after careful study of "the plans

²³ Richmond *Enquirer*, March 9, 1841, Report of Proceedings of Virginia Assembly.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

of the Richmond and Clarksburg conventions, many private suggestions, and the laws and regulations of Northern and Eastern states," this committee returned its report. Its essential recommendations were:

1. A district system similar to that provided under the Act of 1829, but supported by public taxation and the county quota of the Literary Fund and under state management.

2. In addition to the school commissioners' acting as a county board of education, every district should be "under the immediate control and direction of three trustees," two appointed by the tax-payers and one by the board of commissioners. These trustees should appoint teachers approved and certificated by the commissioners, visit their school once a month, examine the scholars, and see that children are sent regularly to school. They should build and furnish their district schoolhouse, etc.

3. "The greatest obstacle to education in Virginia is the want of well-educated and moral teachers," hence men should be encouraged to take up a study of the art of teaching.

4. A state superintendent, who should give "his whole time to the duties of his office," visit the counties, disseminate information on education as well as the art of teaching, regulate the system, construe the law, recommend improvements on the prevailing system and, in fact, "exert his talents in infusing amongst the people an ardent thirst for knowledge and incite them to the pursuit and attainment of that object."²⁵

That this report failed to meet the demands of all sections, is seen in the proposal two years later of Samuel C. Anderson of Prince Edward County that the governor be requested to invite a "committee of the faculty of the University of Virginia, the presidents of the several colleges and . . . other scientific and literary men . . . to collect and prepare all the material which may be necessary to improve the highest systems of education in the state as well as the elementary schools and to report the result . . . to the next legislature of the General Assembly."²⁶

²⁵ *House Journal*, 1841-2, Document No. 53. The V. M. I. was subsidized at this time at the suggestion of this committee; *vide* pp. 123, 194, *supra*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1843-4. This proposal was not realized; but such a commission created in 1910 to unify the educational interests of the state was similarly made up and aimed to accomplish much the same object as that set forth here.

The thinking people, if not the masses, were aroused to the necessity of better schools. Every conceivable device was resorted to to bring the people together on a common plan of administration and support. As a result of the failures of the preceding legislatures and stimulated by campaigns in the Northern states and by the census report, newspaper and lyceum discussions, a series of county, sectional, and state conventions were held. The movement began with the northwest counties at Clarksburg on September 9, 1841. Judge E. S. Duncan sent a letter to this convention and the Reverend Dr. Alexander Campbell made the chief address. An outline for a district free school system, previously prepared by President Henry A. Ruffner of Washington College for the Kanawha Lyceum, was presented. This plan was to play a large part in subsequent history. "A Project for District Schools" which merits study, was submitted by John D. D. Rossett, of Jackson County. The old resentment of the West against the East for its monopoly of internal improvement and for its policy toward the University of Virginia marked the convention. Judge Duncan, in his letter, said:

"The Literary Fund has utterly failed to accomplish the object of its creation. Appropriations have been frittered away on an institution whose tendencies are essentially for the *very rich*, while the Literary Fund primary schools are exclusively intended for the *very poor*. The men of small fortunes are left to their own means. . . . The bone and muscle of the state, the men who pay the taxes, are left out. The great body of the *people* of Virginia and the entire body in the Northwest are deprived of all participation in the Literary Fund. They cannot send their children to the University and they are prohibited if they would from joining in the scramble for the annual donation for primary schools."

President Ruffner's comments are prefaced with the same sentiment:

"Had our state rulers taken the \$800,000 spent on the University and established a system of well-regulated academies they could then have gone on to build upwards toward a university at a future day. The present University has, for want of such a foundation, to take in raw boys that would profit more at a good grammar school or academy. It is a bad way, to put a fine curved and gilded top to a house with a foundation of dirt and walls of rough logs badly put together. All we can do now is to endeavour to mend the foundation and walls which could have been more easily done if the roof had not cost so much." . . .

"Good government is necessary to the protection of all our property and rights and good government cannot be secured in a democracy where the people are badly educated and where great numbers vote at elections."

The convention committee, appointed to prepare a report, recommended: (1) A district school system requiring the erection of suitable schoolhouses in central, healthful, and pleasant localities; (2) a local school tax to supplement state appropriation; (3) the creation of the office of state superintendent of common schools and county superintendents subordinate to him; (4) schools free to *all* white children, "for it would destroy the success of the whole system to allow any distinction between rich and poor"; (5) the establishment of really efficient schools. "If they are not good enough for the *rich* they will not be fit for the poor"; (6) the publication of a common school journal "to give the lives, systems and criticism of Pestalozzi, Basedow, Rochow, Fellenburg, etc.>"; (7) division inspectors "to arouse enthusiasm and overcome inefficiency in spending public money"²⁷ or "we will repeat the waste in Ireland where money is appropriated for education and never spent on it."

Normal schools, it was held, were the first step toward the perfection of a school system; "any system of common schools without this necessary foundation cannot succeed. The Prussian system is best, though despotic, because for half a century (1790) Prussia has trained teachers."²⁸ In arguing for the extension of female education the report says:

"Let all asylums for female children be converted into institutes for the education of *female teachers* where the children may form a model school. Nature has placed the tender years of infancy under the guardianship of the female mind and nature is violated when the law is reversed."

Lyceums and Mechanics' Institutes, with "social libraries" and discussion groups, are suggested.²⁹ Perhaps the most striking portion of the report and one frequently reiterated in spirit within the past decade or two by the officials of the Coöperative Educational Association is the portion dealing with schoolhouses:

"Fine churches, fine railroads . . . and other examples of the impetuosity of our self-interests! while beside the straggling fence that skirts our

²⁷ A board of such divisional inspectors was created in 1905 to increase popular interest in public school improvement, but was abolished in 1910.

²⁸ The normal schools of Austria and Bavaria are mentioned. France is accredited with forty teacher-training schools and New York State with sixteen. *Vide also* preceding chapter on teachers, p. 118.

²⁹ Cf. the rural school community center work of the present Virginia Coöperative Educational Association.

way still stands that wretched mockery of all decency and comfort, half church and half schoolhouse but unfit for either. We build gorgeous houses to sit in in solemn mockery of judgment upon ignorant and unfortunate victims whose criminal fate might have been evaded but for the neglect of society and the expenditure of our public monies in the wrong direction.

"Consumption, curvature of the spine, deranged vision and other horrible consequences are to be traced to mismanaged and illy constructed schoolhouses. If these things are not traceable to every part of Virginia it is because we have not enough proficiency in any system to develop its *good* and *bad* qualities."

The report closes with the generalization:

"Our safety . . . lies in the elevation of the individual . . . in the responsibility of the individual. . . . Republican government and moral responsibility are coördinate propositions."

On October 26, 1841, representatives of the counties of Augusta, Botetourt, Bath, and Rockbridge, led by James McDowell, a delegate from the Clarksburg Convention and subsequently governor of the state, met at Lexington under the auspices of Washington College. Out of this convention came the Ruffner Plan for District Schools. As a plan it bears a strong resemblance to our present completed system and undoubtedly parts of it were written into the Act of 1870. The following is a digest of the Ruffner plan:³⁰

I. A District Free School System, supported by a direct school tax and the Literary Fund income. This to be effected by the division of the counties into districts of certain area. The following administrators and officers: A state board of education, a state superintendent, four sectional superintendents or inspectors, county superintendents, three trustees for each district, and schoolmasters definitely qualified.

1. The State Board of Education to be composed of the State Superintendent and the four inspectors — a purely professional personnel. The State Superintendent, elected by the legislature for three years, must be "rarely trained" for the supervision and administration of the system, and would be the chief executive officer.

2. The chief functions of the Board of Education to be

³⁰ *House Journal*, 1841-2, Document No. 35, Proceedings of Educational Conventions of the North West, p. 12. Also read by Ruffner before the Kanawha Lyceum, in 1840.

- (a) to appoint county superintendents.
- (b) to adopt texts for use in the district schools.
- (c) to apportion funds among the counties.
- (d) to frame general school regulations and exercise a general supervision over the state.

3. To the four sectional superintendents, elected by the legislature and under the direction of the State Superintendent, were to be delegated many of the same responsibilities of the State Board of (four) Examiners created in 1905 and recently abolished. With the exception of the certification of teachers — their duties seem identical with those of that board.

4. The schoolmaster to be appointed by the trustees and examined by the county superintendent for *good character, scholarship, aptness to teach, and business ability*.

II. A normal school to be established in every county with a practice school for "apprentice teachers."

III. The establishment of a library in each school.

The minutes of the Lexington Convention and the details of the Ruffner plan were given wide publicity by the press. Several newspapers published the resolutions of the convention and asked for signatures of indorsement. The *Lynchburg Republican* "makes no apology for so many articles on 'Education,' for the subject must be kept constantly before the people of Virginia till they are brought to act upon it." A meeting of the Society of Alumni of Hampden-Sidney College, October 8, 1841, prayed for legislative encouragement of the intermediate schools, and urged a great state educational convention at Richmond. Local meetings were held throughout the state to elect delegates to this convention. The first county meeting was, it seems, held in Prince Edward, October 18, 1841, and the *Enquirer* published the resolutions of this meeting with the request that the state press copy.³¹ The subject of free schools was brought before a Good Roads convention at Christiansburg, October 25, 1841, and that convention passed a strong resolution calling for school legislation.³² Meetings for the election of delegates to the approaching convention and urging immediate legislation for schools were also held in

³¹ Richmond *Enquirer*, Nov. 2, 1841.

³² *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1841.

Kanawha County, Oct. 14; Lunenburg County, Nov. 8; Mecklenburg County, Nov. 22; King and Queen County, Nov. 26; Hampton and Amherst County, Nov. 27; Halifax County, Nov. 30; Sussex County, Dec. 2; Campbell County, Lynchburg and Petersburg, Dec. 3; Williamsburg, Dec. 6; Henrico County, Dec. 11; Harrison County, Dec. 11; New Kent, Middlesex County, etc.³³ Fredericksburg, Dec. 3, elected James M. Garnett delegate. In Richmond the meeting to elect delegates was evidently a municipal affair, for the mayor of the city was chairman and Thomas Ritchie secretary.

Of the extreme eastern counties, Middlesex was reported as "deeply interested in the cause of education." King and Queen "feels a deep interest in education and will use all means to advance it in the state." New Kent County thinks "some efficient system of primary education, which will reach every class of the community, is essentially necessary to the preservation of our republican institutions; and thanks its former representative, Clayton G. Coleman, "for his strenuous exertions in the cause of education in the General Assembly of Virginia."³⁴ On November 18, Albemarle County, in a stormy local convention, in which the sentiment was to concentrate on the improvement of "the radically defective" primary system, adopted the resolution "that to provide the means of elementary instruction for *all* the youth of a state is one of the first duties of its government."³⁵

Just on the eve of the great state convention an interesting newspaper controversy was carried on by "Virginian," and "E."³⁶ "Virginian" wished it to be understood that the purpose of the approaching convention "is not to build up the old system and perfect colleges and academies but to propose a new system *that will work.*" He says:

"Under the old system, we still have 58,000 illiterate adults fitted only to be hewers of wood, etc. . . . It is clearly our duty to establish a better system, but not by developing colleges and academies with the Literary Fund, against which the legislature of 1811 solemnly protested.

³³ Notices of most of these meetings, with their resolutions, *Richmond Enquirer*, Oct. to Dec., 1841. *Vide* Rockbridge, Memorial, Ohio County petition, etc., *House Journal*, 1840-1, Document No. 40, Second Auditor's Report.

³⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, Dec. 9, 1841.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 9, 1841. This convention resulted in a county system of free schools.

³⁶ It is difficult to determine the identities of these correspondents.

These would be neither accessible to nor attended by either the poor or the great middle class; . . . for where [state] money goes to higher education, free schools languish. . . . Moreover, the sparseness of population is . . . no reason why Virginia should go against the experience of the whole country . . . in failing to adopt a district organization, for even North Carolina has adopted such a system.”³⁷ [He admits that in New York State — always the example — there are thirty-four people to the square mile while Virginia averages only eleven.]

“E” protests that the eastern sentiment is with the claims of the colleges, academies and intermediate schools as a means of promoting education generally. To him the convention will be at liberty to propose “on mature deliberation such a system as will be best calculated to secure the state from an *increase* of the vast amount of ignorance which now prevails.” He continues:

“But the p-o-o-r! ‘Virginian’ talks as if Virginia were a great poor-house and as if no other portion of the community deserves a moment’s consideration. *To read, write and cypher* is quite sufficient for all the rest. . . . This is an aristocratic plan — a plan which the good sense of the people of Virginia has repudiated and will always repudiate. I protest against confounding the independent working man and the one and two hogshead men with the poor in any system devised. . . . We must have good primary schools but we must foster colleges, academies and an university as well.”³⁸ [This — to attain a general system of schools — was the program of the East.]

It was to accomplish this broader project that the delegates assembled in Richmond, December 9, 1841. The most distinguished and representative men of eastern Virginia were members of this body.³⁹ Their memorial to the legislature embraced recommendations regarding all types of schools in the state, with a special emphasis on the lower schools. The primary school report was prepared by Thomas Ritchie, R. G. Scott and B. M. Smith.^{39a} This committee “recommends to the people of Virginia” for their “solemn consideration” the subject of general primary instruction:

³⁷ Richmond *Enquirer*, Nov. 26, 1841.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Dec. 31, 1841.

³⁹ The officers of this convention signing the memorial were: James M. Garnett, president; Edward Watts, vice-president; Robert W. Carter, John W. Peyton, Nathaniel Venable, secretaries; Richard Folger, Edward G. Baldwin, Judge John B. Clapton, Briscoe G. Baldwin, Thomas Ritchie, Robert G. Scott, and Thomas Mitch.

^{39a} For the text of this report addressed a year later “To the People of Virginia,” *vide* Richmond *Enquirer*, November 22, 1842.

"We solicit not your sympathies in behalf of the poor . . . nor wish to excite in your minds any prejudice against the rich. We address ourselves to *all* in behalf of *all*. . . . One county of Virginia, and that one of the most intelligent and wealthy, exceeds by one-half the whole number in a like state of ignorance in Connecticut. . . . In the above state the working classes are all included while in Virginia our largest class of working operatives — nearly one half the entire population — is excluded. . . . We confess the present primary system has done some good . . . we confess owing to sparseness of population . . . an effective system cannot be instantaneously introduced . . . but do these present any reason why we should not energetically attempt . . . a more efficient system?"

The reasons given by the report for the failure of the primary system begin, of course, with the blight of the charity feature.

"Education is represented as a gratuity and men are not accustomed much to value what is cheap. . . . As only the poor and ignorant are interested in the schools that do take the indigent children they must be badly conducted. . . . This imperfect system has failed also for want of systematic superintendence, and careful selection of teachers by competent persons."

The committee suggested the following "principles [as] more consistent with reason, — better adapted to our wants and therefore better calculated to succeed":

I. "That primary schools, accessible without fee to every white child of proper age, ought to be maintained at all practicable points at *public charge*." . . .

II. "That to procure competent teachers is indispensable and to provide instruction and preparation for that office necessary. . . . No pecuniary expense, no laborious examination, should outweigh the importance of the preparation of teachers, . . . instructors trained among us, accustomed to our habits, informed in regard to our institutions, sympathizing with the people."

III. "That vigilant and constant supervision of the schools is absolutely necessary to maintain the vigor of any system. . . . The selection of teachers depends on the superintendence of the system."

IV. "That the principle [of taxation] is adopted as the only practicable one, because primary education, being a common benefit, ought to constitute a common burden and in a population as sparse as our own . . . in many parts of the state, the aid of *all* citizens must be called into requisition or else

the local burden would become so oppressive as to endanger its success. . . . The schools supported by public tax, *voluntarily* imposed by the people of each county, could be thus regulated by *public authority*. . . . All countries in Europe and America relying on private enterprise or government *alone* have signally failed in imparting education to the people."

The committee's plan presupposed *small, permanent* school districts, commissioned with power to determine the amount of levy from a property and poll tax imposed by the county court. No district should share in the state funds till it had erected a schoolhouse and until "a school kept by a qualified teacher" had been open four months. County commissioners should examine teachers and determine the course of study which must embrace "reading *correctly*, writing *well*, arithmetic *practically applied*," besides English grammar, general, United States and Virginia history, United States and Virginia constitutions and the general elements of physical science.

It was shown that the existing primary system costs \$950,000 and yet "22,000 poor children and an indefinite number of thousands who are not poor do not attend school at all"; and those who do, must attend "too often in miserable huts scarcely more comfortable than those you provide for your cattle." It was proposed to place a schoolhouse and competent teacher within reach of "every child of almost every white citizen."⁴⁰ The expense of such a competent system would exceed the cost of the present "do-as-you please" scheme by only seven thousand dollars; four thousand dollars of which would go to the salary and expenses of "an eminent man," the general state superintendent, who should "address the people . . . enlist by eloquent appeals the exertions of individuals in behalf of public education . . . and contributions from their purses; . . . aid in the raising of county levies, etc." Upon the character of this leadership would rest the success of the schools. To gain efficiency, the number of

⁴⁰ The state comprised 64,000 square miles. A school for each 5½ miles square made 2133 districts, plus 167 for towns.

teachers was to be reduced nearly one third and their salaries increased \$50.⁴¹

As might be expected, the financial basis of the new plan was attacked. Caspar Thiel, of Lancaster, Ohio, in writing Mr. Ritchie, soon after the publication of this primary school report in the *Enquirer*, is "gratified that Virginia recognizes education as a right . . . and an object of the care and protection of government." But he voices the reaction within the state when he points out the "heavy items" of expense in the \$140,000 that must go to sheriffs and \$9500 for treasurers' collections alone. He would do away with such expensive and undemocratic officers and let the teachers receive their salaries directly from the tax-payers.⁴²

Tucker Coles, of Albemarle County, also attempts to show the impracticability of the conventions' views. In that county, which received only \$1000 from the Literary Fund, it would be necessary to raise between \$10,000 and \$15,000 by tax or contribution to build forty or fifty schoolhouses. And yet, because of the frequency of waste lands and the size of estates, free schools would not be within reach of thousands who must nevertheless pay for them. "At present," he says, "the want of instruction for these children proceeds more from the want of necessary primary schools than from any deficiency

⁴¹ In detail, the cost was given as:

3243 teachers at \$250 each	\$810,750
Fuel for 3243 schools at \$10 each	32,000
Books and stationary for 100,000 children at \$1 each	100,000
Interest on cost of 3,243 schoolhouses at \$50 each	9,729
Commission of 1% on \$72,000 to treasurers of school commissioners.	720
Salaries of clerks of commissioners at \$25 for 120 counties	3,000

\$956,199

Cost of proposed public school system as compared to the old:

2300 teachers at \$300 each	\$690,000
Superintendent of instruction	4,000
Expense of county commissioners at meetings of Board at \$10 each.	23,000
Fuel for 2300 school at \$10 each	23,000
Books, etc., for 135,000 at \$1 each	135,000
Interest on cost of 2300 schoolhouses at \$200	27,000
Commission of sheriffs for collection, say at 5% on 800,000	40,000
Commission of county treasurers on, say \$950,000	9,500
Repairs of schoolhouses at \$50 each	11,500

\$963,000

⁴² Richmond *Enquirer*, Dec. 8. 1842.

of means." To Mr. Coles, any attempt to divide counties into small districts would fail. He preferred a middle ground, *large* districts with the "privilege of locating at pleasure" schoolhouses to suit the convenience of those interested.⁴³ This distribution, it will be recalled, was advocated by the commission of 1841 appointed by the governor to devise a school system. The commission also suggested the large district plan upon which the post-bellum system went into operation — a subdivision of the county rather than an independent township unit.

The Memorial of the Richmond Convention was submitted to the legislature on February 21, by Mr. W. C. Rives, who had championed state primary schools twenty-five years before. He delivered "a strong, eloquent and thrilling speech in the legislature" on behalf of it.⁴⁴ A bill embracing its main features was successfully fathered by Mr. Thomas of Fairfax, and passed the House on March 17 by "a triumphant majority."⁴⁵ "It was adopted with a strong voice, 'God speed it,'" the *Enquirer* fervently records. On March 22, however, the *Enquirer* regrets to state that "the school bill has been thrown overboard in the Senate." The motion to postpone it indefinitely was rejected by a tie vote but the attempt to amend it and pass it in an amended form failed and the bill was rejected. Thus the high hopes of the campaign leaders of 1838-41 failed of consummation during this legislature. "But," Father Ritchie adds, "there is a time for all things, we will keep up the ball in the course of the year."⁴⁶

Several months later "A True Friend of Popular Education" addresses the following

"TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA: After the zealous efforts . . . which resulted in an Educational Convention and a memorial to our Legislature that we all hoped — alas, how vainly — would produce some law on the subject. . . . I cannot believe that your zeal has been entirely extinguished by this utter disregard of it on the part of your representatives. It is true that a majority of the House did pass a bill after a delay of nearly three months, spent it would be difficult to say how. . . . This was rejected very unceremoniously by the Senate. But what kind of bill was it? . . . Not one of its provisions was to take effect for twelve months and thus more than another precious year to the youth of Virginia was unneces-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 24, 1842.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1842.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Mar. 17, 1842.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Mar. 22, 1842.

sarily lost in the attempt to do what might again fail. . . . Many of the Assembly were so much afraid of doing what they were especially delegated to do as to shift from themselves the labor and responsibility of doing it whenever they could find a plausible pretext for their acting. . . . That the failure of this Legislature to do anything for Popular Education is not the first is certain by several. Now, therefore, it rests with you to determine how much longer you will submit to this continued neglect of the most momentous by far of all our public concerns. Are you content . . . or will you tell them in language not to be misunderstood or evaded that something *must be done!* What is to hinder us from holding meetings in every county to instruct them . . . to pass either the bill of last session or some other! . . . for poor Virginia is suffering most deeply for want of that bread of life which alone can restore her to vigorous moral health.”⁴⁷

“Lancaster,” writing to Governor McDowell in the *Enquirer*, Jan. 24, 1843, comments:

“The first talent of the country is demanded to explain civil rights, but who writes essays on primary education? . . . The almost total neglect with which such efforts are passed by discourages the writer and he flags in his undertaking. To the surprise and pleasure of many, a very respectable number of citizens assembled in Richmond last winter to consider the interest of education but how were the efforts of this body seconded by the people and their legislature? With few exceptions, members of the House and Senate seemed hardly aware of the convention and when its deliberations were laid before them, after its passage in the lower house, it failed in the Senate and for one year more the *people* have slumbered. . . . With all our boasted Republicanism we are in this matter more clearly ruled by an aristocracy than any country on earth, England excepted.”

In 1843 Governor James M. McDowell submits with his annual message a paper by Superintendent Francis H. Smith of the Virginia Military Institute on the establishment of common schools, and, in a lengthy argument for it, says:

“If sixty days’ tuition to one half of the indigent children of the state is the grand result which our present system is able to accomplish after so many years of persevering effort to enlarge and perfect its capacity, it is little more than a costly and delusive *nullity* which ought to be abolished and another and better one established in its place.”

The agitation grew apace, and in December 18, 1845, the second State Educational Convention met in the hall of the House of Delegates during the session of the Assembly.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Richmond *Enquirer*, July 5, 1842.

⁴⁸ The day before this convention met, representatives of the colleges held sessions with Landon C. Garland of Randolph-Macon as president. The first College Convention was held in Richmond at the Exchange Hotel, January 4, 1844, with six colleges, including the University and the Medical College represented.

One hundred and thirteen delegates, representing fifty-one counties, were present. Less than one third of these delegates were from the present state of West Virginia. The discussions were directed by Governor James McDowell, as president of the convention; Judge J. T. Lomax, Judge E. S. Drincall, T. J. Randolph, Spicer Patrick, A. T. Caperton, W. H. MacFarland, J. H. Carson and Samuel Watts were made vice-presidents, while J. S. Gallagher and R. B. Gooch became convention secretaries. These names and the names of county delegates are the best evidence that public education was demanding the interest of the most prominent of the eastern Virginia families. As a preparation for this meeting certain individuals had evidently written to a large group of American educational leaders for guidance, as letters were read from Howard Meeks, educational agent for Maryland, C. List, of Pennsylvania, the Superintendent of New York State, Horace Mann, of Massachusetts, and L. A. Jewett, Col. F. H. Smith, and P. V. Daniel, Jr., of Virginia. Horace Mann mentions the receipt of a letter from several Virginia gentlemen. The substance of Mann's letter to Secretary Gooch is given herewith: He urged state rather than local taxation for schools. "If left to the counties, those needing it most would be the last to levy; how then will they ever move?" He favored a district system of schools that there might be no discrimination in the division of funds. Regarding the relative importance of the lower and higher school he pointedly said: "Heat ascends — it will warm upwards but not downwards." He stressed the need of a state agent to arouse enthusiasm and organize the work. He advised a journal of education. He commented on the poor support he received in Massachusetts, calling it a "labor of love." Finally he urged upon Mr. Gooch the importance of teachers' institutes.

Mr. Stringer, one of the delegates on the floor of the convention, insisted that its main object and business was "to recommend to the legislature and people a more enlarged, energetic and liberal system of primary schools," although it had a lively interest in the University and all the colleges of the state. The main features of this convention's efforts were the appointment of the following gentlemen as a Central

Committee of Education: A. Stevenson,⁴⁹ H. I. Brooke,⁴⁹ C. F. Osborne, T. H. Ellis, S. Maupin,⁴⁹ W. S. Plumer,⁴⁹ R. T. Daniel, W. H. MacFarland, James Lyons, P. V. Daniel, R. B. Gooch,⁴⁹ Geo. W. Munford, H. W. Moncure, the duties of which committee were, in lieu of a state department of education, to watch over and promote the new system proposed; collect and diffuse information on the subject of popular education; and help in the establishing of "Associations of the Friends of Education" in the towns and counties of the state. The Central Committee implies a volunteer state board of education to be associated with the University to excite and preserve the interest of the people in the cause of popular education; while the state Associations of Friends of Education may be regarded as the forerunners of the present Coöperative Educational Association. Their purpose was to effect a permanent state organization of the friends of education and the establishment of local organizations throughout the state "to protect the interests and promote the success of the state system."

Perhaps for this study the most important features of the convention were the majority and the minority reports of the committee on primary schools, differing radically in certain administrative features, particularly the question of school districts. The majority agreed "that the general system of education in the primary schools now supported by the Literary Fund *contains* the *elements* of the *only system* that is suited to the present finances and public temper of the commonwealth." But the state should empower each county to adopt such a system of schools as the majority of voters prefer. Among other suggestions were those of the employment of speakers to arouse interest in the state, the publication of a cheap monthly school journal, and the levying of a small poll tax. Finally, it goes on record against too great authoritative interference by the state "with the mode of the child's education" in the local communities.

The minority report is brought in by Samuel M. Janney, of Loudoun, and Daniel N. Edgerton, of Ohio County:⁵⁰ "Besides its defective financial aspect we consider the present

⁴⁹ From Richmond city. Mr. Daniel represented William and Mary.

⁵⁰ *House Journal*, 1845-6, Document No. 16, 9.

system of Virginia radically defective in several particulars: (1) it creates class distinction between rich and poor; (2) it makes no provision for the examination of teachers as to their moral characters and qualifications; (3) it confers no authority on school commissioners for the selection of school books; (4) it embraces no provision for the education of teachers. In relation to the first of these defects . . . it impairs their [poor children's] standing among their comrades and then their self-respect and frequently prevents their parents from accepting a boon which they think is coupled with odious distinctions. The common school system in placing all classes upon one level is more conducive to equality of feeling . . . and appropriate to our republican institution." The minority takes issue with the claim that Virginia is too sparsely settled to maintain a single school district system and shows that the present Literary Fund would suffice if properly managed.⁵¹ The feasibility of the district system is elaborately defended.

Both the majority and minority report bills to the next Assembly in accordance with their views and the Committee of Schools and Colleges of the 1845-6 session bring in the following recommendations: "That it is inexpedient to adopt the district free school recommended by the Education Convention and that the present system for the education of the indigent should be preserved and amended [but] that any county or corporation should be empowered to adopt such a system of primary schools as a majority of the voters of such counties or corporations may elect; that any tax imposed in addition to the quota of the Literary Fund shall be made legally obligatory upon the same."⁵² With the report of the Committee of Schools and Colleges is a Project on the Subject of Primary Schools by Mr. Lyons, of Richmond, and a Bill for the Establishment of a District School System.

It will suffice to say, in thus outlining Virginia's part in the national movement of 1835-60 for democratization of

⁵¹ A county, according to report, with 15 people to a square mile — Virginia averaged 12 — had enough for a district four miles square or area of 16 sq. mi. 15 by 16 = 240 people. Allowing $\frac{1}{4}$ of 240 as of school age, we have 60 children, about 45 of whom could be expected to come to school, \$300 or \$12 a pupil.

⁵² *House Journal*, 1845-6.

education, that this state did yeoman's service and laid the foundations for the accomplishments of 1850-60, 1869 and 1902. Perhaps in no other state were the "Friends of Education" so energetic or persistent. Certainly in no state was more to be overcome. Census revelations of illiteracy stirred the thinking people of the state as Horace Mann's campaigns had stirred Massachusetts. Although the exposure of ignorance and neglect of the masses stung the pride of Virginia and incited governors, college presidents, political leaders, and educators from both sides of the mountains to call conventions and pass resolutions, only permissive school laws were or could be adopted. The old primary system came in for much abuse. Some wished to abolish it entirely and substitute for it a common school plan based on the experience of the Northern states; but J. Brown, in charge of the actual operation of the Literary Fund since its inception, with others, favored the extension of the primary system as the only safe method to pursue.

The Southern Literary Messenger published, as earlier the *Evangelical and Literary Magazine* had done, voluminous articles in support of the democratic movement. Meetings were held in 1839-41 in numerous places in Tidewater and Piedmont, urging the establishment of common schools. The legislature of 1838-9 actively debated the matter. Many bills were presented and Smith's study of the Prussian state schools was reprinted in the proceedings of that year. Even prizes were offered by the state for an acceptable plan of school administration. The question of Virginia's injustice to her western counties was revived. A concentrated movement for effective legislation began in several parts of the state, culminating in three great common school conventions—Clarksburg, now West Virginia, September 9, 1841, Lexington, October 26, 1841, and Richmond, December 9, 1841. During November preceding the Richmond convention local county meetings were held throughout the state for the election of delegates to this convention. The whole people was "deeply interested in the cause of education."

Eastern influence dominated the Richmond meeting. The school bill which embodied the report of this convention passed the House of Delegates but died in the Senate. On

December 18, 1845, Governor James McDowell, a prominent figure at the Clarksburg and Lexington conventions, called in convention one hundred and thirteen delegates from fifty-one counties to propose new plans for consideration by the legislature then in session. Horace Mann was appealed to for counsel and contributed a letter of concrete suggestions.⁵³ Two reports adopted by this convention were enacted into permissive statutes that year. The provisions of these bills will be discussed in the succeeding chapter. In addition to the actual legislation achieved by this convention, a Central Committee of Education, consisting of thirteen prominent men, was created to act as a volunteer state department of education and help in organizing local associations to arouse the people to the necessity of coöperation and of taxation for schools. This group outlined the work finally achieved seventy-five years later by the present Coöperative Educational Association of Virginia.

⁵³ This and other letters and addresses are printed in full as part of Superintendent Brown's Report for 1845, *House Journal*, 1846-7.

CHAPTER X

THE RESULTS OF THE COMMON SCHOOL REVIVAL. ANTE-BELLUM FOUNDATIONS OF THE VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

THE immediate result of the great conventions, particularly that of 1845, was the passage of three separate acts attempting to satisfy particular sections and interests. These were the twin acts of March 5, 1846, — one, the Act to Amend the Present Primary System, representing in the main the conclusions of the majority report of the 1845 educational convention, the other, An Act for the Establishment of a District System, embodying the minority report, — and a third or Special Act of February 25, 1846, designed for a few counties whose representatives were ready to carry the question of taxation immediately to their constituents.

The first act was largely obligatory on all parts of the state, the second largely permissive. All three acts left the matter of public taxation for schools wholly to the counties. To safeguard property owners, a petition signed by *one third* of the qualified voters of each county was required before a local election could be called on the adoption of either of the twin acts; two thirds of the voters must approve all tax measures at the polls before free schools could become a fact. It can be seen that the petition placed an obstacle in the way of adopting the tax provisions of the twin acts which only great popular enthusiasm could overcome. The Virginia counties needed stimulation to effect the radical innovation of public taxation and popular coöperation. To place such an obstacle doomed these acts to failure from their passage. This was foreseen during that session of the legislature. To anticipate this defeat by special legislation, the friends of free schools succeeded in forcing through the Act of February 25, 1846,¹ designed to give the eastern counties of Lancaster,

¹ Acts of Assembly, 1845-6, Chapter 42. To be voted upon by the people when delegates were elected to the General Assembly without preliminary petition of tax-payers.

Westmoreland, Richmond, King George, Northumberland, Loudoun, Henry, Prince William, York, James City, Fairfax and Williamsburg and the present West Virginia counties of Kanawha and Brooks, statutory permission to lay a levy for the maintenance of a common school system without the difficult preliminary step of petition calling such election. The effect of this particular act will be seen later in the account of Henry County.

The first of the twin acts of March 5, 1846, "An Act to Amend the Present Primary School System,"² in its obligatory sections, may be accepted as a great step in the evolution of a state public school system. By it Virginia inaugurated a system of *county superintendents* to be elected by the county boards of school commissioners. The county superintendent was authorized to act as clerk and treasurer of this board and enjoined to require strict accounting of finance and school attendance from the individual district commissioner. He could, moreover, demand from teachers accepting "state pupils" information regarding their curriculum and method. He was instructed to visit and supervise the schools of the county. An allowance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of all money expended for education the previous year was allowed him as compensation.³ The county must be subdivided into districts, the size of which should in each case be determined "with due regard to population."⁴ The trustees, one for each district, would together constitute a corporate county board of education. Each trustee must provide for the enumeration and registration of all "poor" children in his district who under previous enactments were entitled to free tuition.

So much of this act became binding upon all the counties alike. The election of superintendents, the accurate reporting, etc., went far toward creating a uniform state system. No mention is made of length of term or course of instruction; and the system was to continue to depend upon the limited revenue of the Literary Fund unless voted an increment by

² *Ibid.*, Chapter 40. "An Act to Amend the Present Primary School System."

³ *Vide* Report of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1870: "At this time in the larger counties, the county Superintendents received as much as \$25 and the School Commissioner \$10 annually."

⁴ Bedford County reports, in 1849, that many of its districts were 100 miles square. *House Journal*, 1849-50.

two thirds of the tax-payers of the county. To this act the friends of a *district* system were able to add the following permissive section: "Be it further provided that if the provisions of this act shall fail to meet the needs of any counties or be disapproved by them . . . one fourth of the legal voters . . . may call an election . . . on the question of adopting a *system of district free schools*;" — that is, any system that had been provided by the state or established in any of the counties within the commonwealth. If two thirds of the voters of a county decided at the polls to create a tax for free school purposes, "it must be binding on all parts of the county alike."

The second of these twin acts of March 5, the "Act for the Establishment of a District Public School System,"⁵ was left to the option of the county to accept or reject at the polls. The act provided that "all white children, male and female residents of the districts, shall be entitled to receive tuition at said schools free of charge." Permanent single-school districts were to be laid off, a district being defined as a section containing "sufficient children for a school . . . that all children may attend daily." A specific course of study (*vide* report of the convention minority, p. 151 *supra*) is outlined. County superintendents are not mentioned, but each district must elect three trustees who were to assume very detailed responsibilities as to buildings, sites, repairs, furniture, discipline of pupils, and financial statements. Such trustees must appoint and for cause remove teachers; a fine of ten dollars being placed upon all trustees who should be found negligent in the examination and certification of teachers. State funds could go only to teachers' salaries; each district must build or rent and maintain a proper schoolhouse.

This act, too, has an interesting concluding permissive clause similar to the sister act just discussed and reminiscent of the Act of 1796. The counties who "may not choose to adopt the foregoing provisions for the establishment of free schools may call a meeting of their county magistrates to determine a proper course." These magistrates were authorized through the county court to divide the county into districts under the Acts of February 25, 1829, and March 30,

⁵ Acts of Assembly, 1845-6, Chapter 41.

1837, and to *lay a district levy to cover the total cost of free education of all children* "whose parents are willing" to send them.⁶

The third or Special Act of February 25, 1846, was an effort to establish directly by statute a complete district free school system in certain counties which had already indicated by voluntary citizens' petitions a favorable attitude toward local taxation for education. It did not meet with immediate favor in the counties involved when the rate of the levy became generally known. These counties contained, as was to be supposed, two sets of citizens; those opposed to the common school principle of taxation and those willing to submit to it. Protests or requests for amendment were received at Richmond from angry citizens of practically all the counties concerned.⁷ Henry County, in the southwest mountains, was one of those which immediately accepted the provisions of the new act. But as soon as the *cost* of free schools was computed "the biggest petition ever sent to the Virginia legislature" was presented at Richmond over the heads, it seems, of the school commissioners, protesting violently against the tyranny of the state in imposing a direct tax on property, and threatening "to secede" if this injustice was not corrected. The petition declares:

"The new law arrays class against class. . . . The power to vote direct tax upon property is given to the man who is utterly destitute . . . and the commissioner's power to tax [i.e., to lay school levy and submit budget to the court] is unlimited. . . . We want protection against this galley yoke . . . by which inducements are held out to the worthless and the idle to tax the man of substance for the benefit of the former."

The petition shows that the establishment of the new system would raise the tax from \$3500 for all civil purposes to

⁶ Foreseeing a repetition in many counties of the indifference of county judges to act on popular school measures and the failure of the people to press them, a bill to provide for cases in which the courts failed to comply with the law just described occupied many hours of debate in the legislature which passed these acts. Complicated and confusing amendments were proposed to defeat or improve this bill. The house committee attempted to amend it and Mr. Carson even attempted to amend the amendment. An amendment by Mr. Burwell, of Bedford, is attacked by Mr. Sheffey, of Augusta. Mr Daniel, of Richmond, proposed a third amendment. A fourth attempt is Mr. Zerby's demand for \$100, later reduced to \$50, to enable the counties to increase their school enrollment without a prohibitive local tax. *Vide House Journal, 1845-6.*

⁷ *House Journal, 1845-6.*

\$10,500⁸ to be paid by 7000 inhabitants. Thus the tax would be:

"Trebled in one year, and then many people will either have to board their children near the school or keep them at home. . . . Virginia cannot compel us quietly to submit. [So far as Henry is concerned they] pray that this free school act be speedily repealed and the buildings be sold,⁹ etc."

It became necessary to provide a second vote in all the counties affected by this special act, "to test the continuance of district free schools." King George County was authorized to call a new election "in case the people reject the system established February 25, 1846." In Henry County, in spite of the petition just mentioned, the people on a second vote sustained the new system by the decisive vote of 332 to 196, "and it may be regarded as the settled policy of the county." In reporting this, the commissioners add:

"The value and importance of the system . . . as well as its economy, compared with the imperfect system which has heretofore existed . . . is so apparent that the board deems it unnecessary to say more. . . . It is fully persuaded that nothing short of a district school system sustained at common expense and open to all free of charge . . . can fit the masses for their duties in a republican government."

Permission to incorporate district free school systems was given Ohio, Jefferson, Kanawha, Patrick, Marshall, Cabell, and Wayne counties, etc., in Western Virginia,¹⁰ but the reports of 1860 indicate that only Ohio, Jefferson, and Kanawha actually adopted free schools. Thus the section composing the present state of West Virginia was as tardy as the East in adopting any one of the district systems requiring local taxation for their support. In 1848 Portsmouth incorporated a public school system.¹¹ Under the Martin Dawson bequest, Albemarle incorporated a similar system;¹² King George was permitted to establish a free school "within each area of four square miles."¹³ Washington County, "not approving the provisions of any of the

⁸ *House Journal*, 1846-7. As a matter of fact free school expenditures, in Henry County in 1849, two years later, were about \$5000 (\$4000 from direct tax).

⁹ *House Journal*, March 10, 1847.

¹⁰ Acts of Assembly, Chapters 97, 101.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 104, March 28, 1848, Feb. 17, 1845.

¹² *Ibid.*, Chapter 110, March 14, 1849.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 113, March 8, 1849.

laws of 1846," preferred to "continue in operation under the system of 1829," but asked for certain amendments to improve that statute.¹⁴ One county adopted the *magisterial* district system which Virginia has finally accepted as her permanent unit of local school control,—Accomac, broken by the configuration of the eastern shore line, was allowed to divide itself into districts corresponding to its magisterial divisions.¹⁵ Each magisterial district voted its own tax rate for schools and became a unit of school control. Unlike the present state school organization in Virginia, each district in Accomac was provided with its own superintendent.

Even the conservative Amended Primary School law, the first of the Twin Acts of March 5, just described, was not accepted gracefully. Petitions — all of which were by vote laid on the table — were sent to the Legislature from commissioners in the eastern counties of York, Surrey, Pennsylvania, Westmoreland, Nansemond, etc., praying for exemption from even the few obligations outlined. Albemarle County, on the other hand, "accords hearty approbation to the leading provisions of the Amended Primary System," i.e., the division of the county into *convenient districts*, with a commissioner for each district, a *county superintendent*, and *exact enumeration of pupils*:

"These distinctive principles are auspicious of better results than have heretofore attended the educational afforts of the state. . . . But obscurities in these primary acts of 1846 and 1847 — acts not in themselves complete systems but a sort of patch work intended to alter the pre-existing laws without due attention to correspondence of the parts — gives rise to much embarrassment."

According to the Albemarle superintendent, the actual enumeration, of "poor" pupils under the new law was a big step in preparing the way for free schools because it revealed the large number who could never go to school until the quotas were doubled or trebled. For in the county 1298 such children between the ages of six and sixteen were registered in 1847, while the old methods had revealed only 550 children under twenty-one.¹⁶

Throughout the state similar revelations were made by the commissioners, who, in answer to Mr. Brown's specific query,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter 102, 1847.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1853.

¹⁶ *House Journal*, 1848-9, Second Auditor's Report, Albemarle County.

almost universally declared that the state quota was wholly inadequate to meet the demands of the poor. Many teachers continued to accept "poor" children without hope of even the "poor" scholar's fees.¹⁷ The fee, too small at four cents a day to induce good teachers to do the necessary daily book-keeping for it, dropped as low as two and a half cents in some counties and the Marion County superintendent, in admitting this, adds that "considering the teachers, that's high," and with apparent disgust condemns

"the miserable system of common school education in this state. The more experience [one] has . . . the more clearly is [one] convinced of the selfish, narrow-minded, impracticable bungling Legislation that has been made on the subject . . . there is nothing in the whole system that partakes of more of the practical humbug than the accounts and statements required by the Superintendent of the Literary Fund."¹⁸

The report of the Marion commissioners the following year contains a more vigorous protest and a more direct personal attack on Brown:

"While other States are becoming powerful by the liberal support they give public education, Virginia is impotent to everything that pertains to national greatness. Develop the intellects of the rising generation and they will develop the natural resources of the state. In short, it is useless to try to conceal the miserable, *rickety* system of Public Education in this Commonwealth by flaming reports and abstracts of its condition."¹⁹

Fluvanna County declared itself wholly unable to meet the demands of its poor, and with Charlotte "entertained little hope that anything short of free schools will ever remove this difficulty."²⁰

"A fair trial of it [The Amended Primary System] may not be without important results and it may lead in due time to the adoption by the county of some one of the plans which lie at its option whenever it shall see fit. It is believed that the district free schools system might now or very soon be adopted if the necessary steps were taken for the purpose."²¹

This same writer, in a subsequent report, advocated the district free school system to replace "the present usage,"²² which he could not call a system. The Giles board of school commissioners is satisfied from the trial given the Amended Primary School System in that county and from the benefits already apparent arising therefrom, that

¹⁷ *House Journal*, Auditor's Report, 1848.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Fluvanna County, 1848.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Marion County, 1849.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Charlotte County, 1848.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Marion County, 1850.

²² *Ibid.*, 1849.

"if those to whom its management has been committed will do their duty, it will not only reflect credit upon its projectors but carry with it blessings to the poor and unfortunate throughout Virginia. [The newly appointed Superintendent] begs leave to remark that he has not visited schools generally, owing to the fact that in some instances three month schools were concluded before he knew of their existence."²³

The Gloucester County superintendent states:

"After ten years as commissioner the superintendent is decidedly in favor of a district free school system. . . . We have tried the old primary system and are now trying it amended and still little is accomplished and all for want of interest . . . of the people. . . . Now under a system of free schools the mass of the people are compelled to be instructed. . . . Adopt a system of free schools."²⁴

The superintendent of King William County, in the extreme East, thinks the task of arousing the state to its educational needs a field for a nobler patriotism than that of battle,²⁵ but as a true Easterner he wished school progress to be an evolution rather than a revolution. From Richmond County, also, in the extreme eastern conservative section, comes this outburst:

"It is idle and sinful . . . to prate about progressive principles of democracy and attempt to be propagandists of these principles among people when decay and ruin are at work. . . . Under the strong government of Austria, education has been made compulsive, but under our mild system of laws it would, I fear, be considered too rigid to compel a parent to send his child to school when he needs him at home. Parents and guardians should be convicted in the form of a religious tract for gratuitous distribution, that *ignorance not poverty* is disgraceful."²⁶

Perhaps the superintendent of Lewis County, now West Virginia, stated the situation for the whole state when he bluntly put the blame for the failure of the primary schools not on the legislature but on the poorer people who refused to patronize the schools, not because of any repugnance for free education but because they cared too little for the education of their children to spare them from work at home.²⁷ The superintendent of Albemarle County to overcome this apathy urged "vigilant supervision" of local schools; and a diffusion of "statistical and other information" among the people to convince the masses that the "old system is

²³ *Ibid.*, Giles County, 1848.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Richmond County, 1849.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Gloucester County, 1848.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Lewis County, 1849.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, King William County, 1849.

really incapable of improvement.”²⁸ He, too, placed his finger upon fatal weaknesses: (1) the lack of intelligent recognition on the part of the masses, as well as the well-to-do, that further progress could come only through local school tax, through abandoning the idea that the state could give something for nothing: and (2) the lack of a strong, central authority to diffuse information in a more popular way.

The three school acts of 1846 make no mention of either a state superintendent or a state board of education with power and obligations beyond those of the officers of the Literary Fund Board. A volunteer state board was organized, with the appointment of the 1846 convention’s “Central Committee of Education” which attempted to serve the purposes of a state board (*vide p. 150 supra*). New local machinery was evolved through the new acts, but the state’s place in the administration of them remained a mere dispensing of the endowment fund. It had not adopted the instrument of control so effective in present administration of funds — the *withholding* of “state aid” where specified standards are not achieved, and the rewarding of progressive communities, with special financial aid.²⁹

Without a central guide or unifying force, the state labored under a confusion of school systems. The Act of 1818 had finally evolved into the Amended Primary System of 1846, without the aid of local taxation to develop its possibilities, limited as they were; the Act of 1829, and the defeated proposals of 1778, 1796, 1817, had evolved into the District System of 1846 and a series of minor acts for several counties adopting phases of the district free school system. In the Revised State Code of 1849,³⁰ an attempt was made to provide every county at once with some system of free schools by offering the option of adopting *any one* of the several *district* systems already authorized in the past. This choice must be made before July 1, 1850, when the code was to become effective.

²⁸ *House Journal*, Albemarle County, 1849. The report urges that the reports of the superintendent of the Literary Fund be distributed widely through the state and that popular interest be aroused by “primary associations” and through visits of a state school official “to each senatorial district to deliver addresses and distribute information, etc.”

²⁹ This, one may recall, was Charles Fenton Mercer’s advice to Virginia in 1817 and in 1826 to the American States. *Vide pp. 59-61, supra*.

³⁰ Acts of Assembly, 1848.

It was becoming evident, however, to the friends of education that to secure compulsory taxation for common schools was all but impossible. Attempts to enforce the code were received with little encouragement in the counties for which it was especially intended. Murmurs arose in many quarters, and positive opposition in at least three counties — Appomattox, Warren and King William. The expression of this antagonistic spirit may be found in the commissioners' report to Brown in 1850. Appomattox states plainly that it "does not adopt the new system [district] of the Northern States, as it doesn't suit our conditions."³¹ More caustic still is the superintendent of King William, who vigorously states:

"There is but one result inevitable. The whole fabric of the indigent school system which has really begun to do the State some service, will tumble to the ground. The new bill may be for the purpose of forcing the free school system upon a reluctant people. If it was intended to be carried out, it was framed with an ignorance of the manners, habits, customs, and circumstances of those upon whom it was to operate, or a more wicked disregard of them is unparalleled."³²

Happily, the report from Norfolk County for this same year contains a personal note of congratulation to Mr. Brown, warmly supporting his efforts. The writer says: "Property is deeply interested in the education of all. . . . Higher interests are at stake and to *educate, educate, educate* is the only sure means of their promotion."³³ When the code went actually into operation a representative group of counties and cities created systems of free schools which mark the beginning of a genuine system of common schools freed from the odium of poor laws and open to all. These were the "District Free Schools for the Education of All Classes." Auditor Brown and his successors thereafter report this group as a separate state school system.³⁴ In 1855 these

³¹ *House Journal*, 1850-1, Second Auditor's Report, Appomattox County.

³² *Ibid.*, 1850-1, Second Auditor's Report, King William County.

³³ *Ibid.*, Norfolk County. This enthusiastic letter from Superintendent Thomas Hume contains an account of his trip to a Philadelphia meeting (1850) of the National Teachers Association, the forerunner of the National Education Association, to which it appears he was sent by his trustees at public expense. This report is rich in suggestions for the selection, examination, and certification of teachers and is eloquent for the spread of the gospel of free schools.

³⁴ In 1853 Superintendent J. Brown, Jr., in charge of the state schools since 1823, was succeeded by William L. Jackson. Two years later William M. Monroe became Second Auditor, serving till the Civil War.

common school systems were in full operation in the eastern counties of Accomac, Elizabeth City, Norfolk, Princess Anne, Northhampton, King George, and the Tidewater cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Fredericksburg; and in the trans-Alleghany counties of Washington, Jefferson, Ohio, Kanawha, and the city of Wheeling. The counties of Franklin and Monroe, which adopted the Act of 1829, do not appear in 1860 among these progressive counties. The most active of them was the Norfolk County and Portsmouth City system, under the superintendence of Thomas Hume.

One of the interesting facts relating to these new systems is that they did not represent any particular section but were widely scattered over the state. The counties of Elizabeth City, Princess Anne, and Norfolk are within a radius of a few miles of Norfolk, while Washington County in the extreme southwestern corner of the state is four hundred miles away. King George, in the "Northern Neck," is fifty miles below Washington on the Potomac River and but a short distance from Fredericksburg. Jefferson County, at the mouth of the Shenandoah, is in the lower "Valley of Virginia," Ohio County and Wheeling, in the Panhandle, touching Ohio and Pennsylvania, and Kanawha, are in the south central portion of West Virginia. Accomac and Northhampton Counties, across the Chesapeake Bay, comprise what has long been known as "the Eastern Shore." *Every section of the state, every original geographical division, had at least one genuine common school experiment in operation.* In addition to these, other counties had local common schools in operation under private endowment; Albemarle and Nelson, for instance, were operating under the Martin Dawson Fund. Wood County and the city of Parkersburg voted to join the other counties in the new plan, but were unable to put the law into effect before the War.³⁵ It appears that all these experiments, with the exception of "the Eastern Shore," followed the industrial development of adjacent towns.

Jefferson County, in 1855, was expending \$4100 on teachers' salaries in twenty-seven common schools. The

³⁵ Second Auditor's Report, House Documents 1856-7; 1861-2. Other counties voted on free schools too late to report or even adopt them.

commissioners report "good substantial schoolhouses in all the districts, comfortable and commodious; the system is gradually accomplishing its object."³⁶ A nominal fee of fifty cents a quarter was charged for tuition, but "no one is dismissed on account of inability to pay.... Opinion prevails and it seems to be spreading that the free school deserves still greater encouragement."³⁷ King George reports progress: "While the rich and the poor are alike entitled to instruction . . . an annual tuition fee is nominally charged . . . not to exceed \$4 and graduated to meet the ability of all." The commissioners suggest a local tax of only "10 per cent on state taxes and $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on merchant's and ordinary's licenses" to supplement this tuition fee. This county complains of "the manifest indifference of parents, for whom the schools are intended." Elizabeth City County reports in 1860: "Schoolhouses are in all the districts with necessary school fixtures and apparatus . . . respectable persons competent to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar and geography are employed to conduct them at the rate of compensation varying from \$1 to \$1.60 a day."³⁸ Portsmouth, under Superintendent Hume, was typical of the best in the state. Mr. Hume says, "The system is working efficiently with us. We regard our public free schools as the great fountain from which fertilizing streams already begin to flow and which shall truly enrich our community. We educate in our schools all classes."³⁹

Fluvanna, though not on the common school basis, indicates a practice employed in a number of counties in reporting that public education was being promoted by taking in all children who were willing to come, with the understanding among the parents that deficiencies in the Literary Fund quota would be made up by them. The superintendent of

³⁶ *House Journal*, 1856-7, Second Auditor's Report, Jefferson County. Ex-State Superintendent Thomas C. Miller writes that at least one of these schoolhouses remains in the county and is now occupied by a negro family.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1861-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Elizabeth City County. The course of study here outlined is the one common to all these schools, a few schools taught "Latin, mathematics and moral and natural science," but this was the exception. These subjects were left to the subsidized private academy. Jefferson County gives \$300 as the average teacher's salary.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1861-2, Norfolk County.

Fluvanna says: "There are no schools exclusively confined to indigent children, but some are principally of this class. There does not appear to be any difference manifested in the attention paid by teachers to the other class." Mecklenburg at the same time could, with some enthusiasm, exclaim, "We are happy to say that we do not find the morals of our children corrupted by association with the indigent, as many supposed."

There was, on the eve of the Civil War, a superintendent and a county board of school commissioners in every county of the state. In 1861 every superintendent in the state gave at least a financial report on local expenditures of the Literary Fund. Many of them took occasion to suggest to the Second Auditor improvements in administration and method. These county superintendents were, under the obligatory sections of the Amended Primary School Act of 1846, required to examine and license teachers, enforce uniformity of textbooks, and stimulate community interest in public education. The commissioners, under the same law, were charged with the supervision of teachers and the care of school property. Although many superintendents neglected the schools for their farms and business, there were others who made real effort to examine and certificate teachers, to improve teaching methods by securing uniformity of texts and by inaugurating teacher's meetings. Superintendent Hume of Norfolk County, who attended the National Teachers' Meeting in Philadelphia in 1850, was conspicuous in this movement. Superintendent J. D. Imoboden of Augusta County reports in 1854 that at the Second Auditor's suggestion he called a joint meeting of teachers and commissioners on *December 25*, "but only a small number of commissioners and fewer teachers were present."

The Auditor's report for 1860-1 shows that up to July of the latter year, the state had disbursed \$298,869.89 of the annual income of \$316,663.76 for public education. The permanent capital of the Literary Fund was now \$1,877,364.68. The above disbursement did not include expenditures of local taxes and subscriptions in the counties organized on the basis of "Free Schools for All Classes," or of those operating under the Special Act of 1846. Of the total expenditure

of state moneys, \$190,075.79 had been paid over to school commissioners in 134 counties and 3 towns, for tuition, books, to administrative officers, etc., for the Literary Fund schools.⁴⁰

In conclusion it may be said that the last unsuccessful stand for a uniform system of education was made in the Virginia Educational Convention, which held two sessions in Richmond, July 23, 1856, and August 25, 1857.⁴¹ These gatherings were largely in the interest of the higher schools' share in the Literary Fund. The first session was devoted to a discussion of the work of the schools. At the second session a vigorous investigation of the condition and administration of the Literary Fund was made. Both meetings were dominated by Governor Henry A. Wise. His address in 1856,⁴² although florid at times, was a strong appeal to action and was so severe in its arraignment of existing chaotic conditions in laggard counties that he was forced to explain later that he had intended no charge against any individual county superintendent or commissioner. Abolition of the charity feature,—the stumbling block to a state system; the inauguration of a system of university supervision over the subsidized academies and of academy supervision over the district schools; the establishment of summer schools for teachers; a state agricultural school, etc., were among the things advocated in this convention address. "Further," he said, "it only wants a consentaneous, united movement to carry educational reform through the next legislature. The public mind is awake to the subject, the people really want their sons and daughters educated and the funds of the state to be most economically applied to that end. We have only to raise the standards of our institutions to win popular favor." It might be interpolated here that when Mr. Wise resigned his seat in Congress several years before to become Minister to Brazil, he addressed an open letter to his constituency:

"If I had the archangel's trumpet, — the blast of which would startle the living of all the world — I would snatch it at this moment and sound it in the ears of all the people of the debtor states and the states which have a solitary poor, unwashed, uncombed child, untaught at a free school — TAX YOURSELF! For what?

⁴⁰ House Documents, 1861-2. Document No. 7.

⁴¹ *House Journal*, 1857, Supplement to Governor Wise's Annual Message.

⁴² House Documents, 1857. Governor's Message.

"1. To pay your state debt.
 "2. To educate your children — every child of them — in common schools at state expense . . . distrust all men who make false promises of freedom from taxation but tax yourself and learn to believe in it as the *only* means of getting what you need. . . . There is no royal road to paying debts or to education. Industry, honesty, economy and education alone can make you a free and happy people. . . . Educate your children — all of your children — every one of them! . . . Don't wait for a tardy legislature, but organize yourself and make money by a voluntary system."⁴³

In still another connection we find Wise saying:

"Schools should not be a state charity, but the chief element of the *freedom* of the state. . . . The poor man helps to make the state what it is; he discharges all his duties and ought to get all the rights and privileges. Let us abolish the old system and let all the children come 'without money and without price.'"⁴⁴

In 1857, Governor Wise, in a special message to the General Assembly, advocated the convention's schedule of appropriation:

University of Virginia	\$25,000
Medical College	4,500
Virginia Military Institute	4,500
Twelve colleges	36,000
To higher primary schools	36,000
To infant primary schools	<u>115,000</u>
	<u>\$221,000</u> ⁴⁵

Before the expiration of his term, Governor Wise repeated his recommendation that an appropriation of \$250,000 be made — \$120,000 to be devoted to the development of a well-administered system of common schools, and \$40,000 to the establishment and maintenance of one hundred high schools scattered through the state. This appropriation, however, was not made, as the legislature and people of Virginia were even then facing civil war. There could be no further institutional development. In the secret session of the Virginia Convention of 1861, which passed the Ordinance of Secession, the revenue of the Literary Fund — except the customary appropriation to the University of

⁴³ Reprint *American Journal of Education*, 1856, Vol. II, 557. Wise, in this open letter, strongly advocates a competent state administration of public education.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *House Journal*, 1857, Governor's Annual Message.

Virginia and to the Virginia Military Institute — was appropriated for the military defense of the state, and the primary schools were, in consequence, suspended.⁴⁶ In the fall of 1861 Governor Letcher recommended that no further legislation be attempted till the restoration of peace.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *House Journal*, 1861, supplement, Ordinance No. 66, Virginia Secession Convention, June 26, 1861.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1861-2. Bi-Annual Message to General Assembly, fall session.

CHAPTER XI

EVOLUTION OF COMMON SCHOOLS INTERRUPTED BY THE CIVIL WAR. THE ACT TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA, 1870. THE PRIN- CIPLE OF STATE CONTROL ACCEPTED

THE evolution of public education in Virginia was sadly interrupted by the War between the States. The nuclei of experiments in popular education scattered through the state in 1861 were abandoned when the Literary Fund was diverted to military defense. After the War the state at large seemed to forget its ante-bellum history of education; popular opinion was easily raised against common free schools. First, they involved great public expense at a time when the state staggered under debt; second, and more to the point if we are interested in the evolution of the free school idea, they became involved in the political controversies of the period of Reconstruction and associated with carpet-baggers and rabid equalitarian theories.¹

Public education, in fact, presented a new and menacing situation, more serious than were attacks on property. A new free class was ready for the common school,—the emancipated negro; and many a negro and a few white radicals proposed that democratization be made complete by admitting him on terms of equality with the whites of all classes. The negro was led to place his faith in the power of "literary" education as a means of giving him all that slavery had denied. In this enthusiasm he reversed the early nineteenth-century white man's apathy toward free "literary" schools. To the negro, only mixed schools could guarantee his complete emancipation, and, with the aid of sincere humanitarians and political adventurers, he fought consistently for one common system of free schools for both races till

¹ Cf. Eckenrode, H. J., *The Political History of Virginia during Reconstruction*, Johns Hopkins Studies.

the good sense of the white men of both political parties asserted itself and repudiated the idea. Naturally, in the effort to break the political purpose of Reconstruction, and overcome the effort of the Union Leagues to force racial equality within the state, capital was made of this race fear. Public education was not only a heavy burden for a broken state to assume, but it threatened to be a social menace, if equal manhood suffrage was to mean mixed schools.

The Hon. Harry St. George Tucker, sometime dean of the law departments of Washington and Lee and George Washington Universities, said, in 1906, in advocating better public schools in his campaign for the gubernatorial nomination, that his first political speech was a bitter attack on the imported free school system. A prominent lawyer of Williamsburg once said to the writer that he conceived a bitter prejudice against two innovations of reconstruction — canned goods and the public school system. This bias is typical of many of the past generation, as many of this generation can testify. With this emotional reaction against free schools came a revival of the early motion that only private schools were worthy of support by the respectable, that the free school idea had, in fact, been repudiated by old Virginia and was a "Yankee leveler that would undermine the state's domestic institutions and destroy all society lines."

It is true that the Underwood constitution of 1867-8 speaks clearly for the first time on public education.² Under Article VIII, the General Assembly must provide "at its first session under this constitution a uniform system of public free schools and for its gradual equal and full introduction . . . by 1876, and as much earlier as practicable." On July 11, 1870, "An act to establish and maintain a System of Public Free Schools" was approved.³ But in passing this act, Virginia

² The constitution submitted to the "people" of Virginia in 1864 by the Alexandria Unionist Convention provided for free schools and public taxation for their support.

³ Constitution of Virginia, 1869, Art. VIII, Sec. 3. (West Virginia passed an "Act Establishing a Free School System," Dec. 10, 1863, Acts of Assembly, Chapter CXXXVII of that state.) At the outset preference was to be given to elementary schools; to *graded* schools where the number of children justified. In 1874-5 provision was made for the "introduction of higher branches . . . when in accordance with the judgment of county and district boards; the purpose being to encourage a grade of instruction intermediate between the common school and

did not *create* a new system of free schools. It rather perfected its old system by the addition of the three main features, repeatedly suggested before the War: (1) A compulsory statute creating a central school government under the direction of a state superintendent, and local officials partially paid by the state; (2) the entire elimination of class distinctions,— which the ante-bellum "Schools for All Classes" had already done in large measure; (3) "an annual tax upon the property of the state of not less than one mill or more than five mills on the dollar." The Literary Fund, with all proceeds from lands donated by Congress for public school purposes, all escheated property, all waste and appropriated lands, all forfeitures, and all fines collected for offenses committed against the state was rededicated to common school education. The capitation tax "of one dollar on all men over twenty-one" created in 1851 was reinserted in the new constitution. Permission was given local districts to impose a tax upon themselves, "not to exceed five mills on the dollar."⁴

The post-bellum school organization finally adopted under this act and subsequent amendments provided for (1) a State Superintendent of Public Instruction with extensive powers, appointed by the General Assembly; (2) a State Board of Education,⁵ comprised of the governor, attorney-general and the state superintendent,— with power to name, with the concurrence of the senate, a superintendent for each county and, until 1877, the district trustees as well; (3) county superintendents, paid for the most part from the Literary Fund, who by virtue of their salary and election by the State Board, became *state* rather than local officers; (4) a board of three trustees for each school district;

college, and such branches were authorized as are necessary to qualify pupils to become teachers as well as to fit for college." Report of U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1880, 326, based upon Superintendent Ruffner's report for the preceding year.

⁴ Constitution, 1868, Art. VIII, Sec. 8.

⁵ To insure a nonpartisan board, subsequent legislation in 1900 has extended the membership of this board to eight, adding a city and county superintendent of schools and three members from among the faculties of higher state educational institutions. These are selected by the legislature on nomination from the staffs of these schools. In this way only three out of eight men are elected on party tickets and the board is removed from the test of the ballot in a way which would have never received the approval of Jefferson.

(5) a school trustee electoral board (added in 1877) made up of the county superintendent, the commonwealth's attorney, and the county judge or a free-holder appointed by him,— its duty being to elect the county boards of school trustees or commissioners; (6) the division of the counties into school districts corresponding to the magisterial districts, not fewer than three districts to a county and each district to be subdivided into local districts or townships of not fewer than one hundred people — the county remaining the unit of government and the local district becoming the subunit; (7) teachers chosen by "subdistrict directors," employed by district trustees, and certificated by the county superintendent.

Apparently this scheme had little reference to the Jeffersonian ideal of local school administration and the great Democrat's fear of government. Autocratic powers were put in the hands of a few; for in this hierarchy of centralized power, the actual administration of local schools was removed from the electorate at practically all crucial points. The state assumed ample power to force or entice the local communities to improve school conditions. The Literary Fund remained the chief instrument of state control and has played a great part in recent years in the appointment of non-partisan county superintendents and in the rapid increase of high school buildings through loans from the principal for such purposes.⁶

The General Assembly had, before the Civil War, been largely occupied with theoretic discussions of state *versus* local control and how, in establishing schools, to avoid taxation for them. The new constitution settled the first controversy and led the people into accepting the principle of taxation. Well-grounded fears, apathy and indifference, as well as a new, strong political opposition remained to be overcome. Sincere friends of the private school idea must be convinced; misrepresentation was rife. The success of the new system must depend upon a vigorous, aggressive,

⁶ Acts of Assembly, March 15, 1906, revised March 26, 1916. This double use of the Literary Fund to encourage local taxation and school improvement was a happy thought. Now the community desiring to build a new schoolhouse can borrow from the *principal* of the Literary Fund itself giving fifteen-year bonds at 3 per cent and 4 per cent. The writer is informed that about one third of the principal of the Literary Fund is now at interest in the various school districts of the state.

yet persuasive state leadership. This could be supplied only by a native in possession of the confidence of the best people of the state and able to interpret the new in terms of the history of the state.

It could have been no accident, then, that Dr. William H. Ruffner, suggested, it is said, by General Robert E. Lee himself, was appointed the first state superintendent by a Republican General Assembly. The new superintendent was a native Virginian whose father, Dr. Henry A. Ruffner, president of Washington College and the most prominent figure in the ante-bellum Virginia common school revival,⁷ had long before proposed a way to a state system of free schools. Superintendent Ruffner's first contribution to the state was the Act of 1870 itself. Elected by the legislature on March 2, he, with the assistance of Professor J. B. Minor, worked out the details of the bill that was passed in July.⁸ Familiar with the work of his father and the evolution of public education before the War, his first effort was, as he said himself, to convince the people from their own history that the new act was the fruit of their own effort made before the carpet-bagger and scalawag came. He furnished, therefore, one of the essentials of success, a popular campaign as to the origin, purposes, and future of free schools. Superintendent Ruffner's controversy with the Reverend R. L. Dabney, D.D., in defense of "The Public School System"—seven articles published in the Richmond *Enquirer*, April, 1876, and his "Circulars—Reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1870-9"—furnish a most comprehensive documentary history of education in Virginia up to that period.⁹

⁷ William Henry Ruffner and the Rise of the Public Free School System of Virginia, John P. Branch, Historical Papers, Randolph-Macon College, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 124-144; also Sketch of Wm. H. Ruffner by his daughter, Mrs. Barclay, *West Virginia Historical Magazine*, October, 1902; and *Virginia School Journal*, May 1, 1902.

⁸ Virginia School Report, 1885, Part Three. In less than four weeks after the passage of the act, the State Board organized and elected twelve county superintendents. On January 1, 1871, the state system was in operation. During this year 3000 schools, with 130,000 children in attendance, were in operation. There were 27,000 children in private schools.

⁹ Besides a lucid statement of the arguments for state-supported nonsectarian public education, Dr. Ruffner includes in circulars the following documents: abstracts from the letters of Thomas Jefferson, Jan. 14, 1818; Jan. 22, 1820; Nov. 28, 1820; Dec. 25, 1820; Jan. 13, 1823; Jan. 11, 1826; Feb. 7, 1826;

It is interesting to note that although Superintendent Ruffner was compelled to combat ignorance, apathy, and poverty, he encountered little active opposition except in the form of such academic controversies as that with Dabney. The Underwood Convention, fearing open resistance against a uniform system of free schools, inserted in its constitution a clause providing that "each city and county shall be accountable for the destruction of school property that may take place within its limits by incendiaries or open violence."¹⁰ But "not a case of incendiарism or violence occurred," for, as Dr. Ruffner put it, "taken altogether, probably no new scheme of legislation ever operated more smoothly."¹¹

Not, however, until the second generation after Reconstruction, in the first decade of the twentieth century, did that New Era prophesied in 1816 come to the state. This constructive period of state inspection, consolidation of elementary schools, the real beginning of high schools, final acceptance of school taxation with maximum levies for school purposes, had its beginnings in the administration of Governor Andrew Jackson Montague, 1900-04, and that régime of vigorous reconstruction under the leadership of Joseph D. Eggleston, 1906-13. But the history of the post-bellum era is beyond the province of this study; it need only be said that the powers of the hierarchy created in 1869 were by the code of 1902¹² greatly increased and that the state is, indeed, entering upon a new era.

facts regarding the several plans of Jefferson; a letter from President Monroe to Governor Nicholas, 1816; Governor Campbell on "Public Free Schools"; the Governor's messages of Jan. and Dec. 1830, dealing with illiteracy and praying for the preparation of good teachers; John P. Thompson on "Public Schools"; the message of 1843 of Governor McDowell, "Life-long Advocate of Public Schools"; Superintendent Smith of V. M. I.: "Upon the Establishment of Common Schools in this State"; the addresses of Governor H. A. Wise on the necessity of public free schools, etc.

¹⁰ Constitution of 1868, Art. VIII, Sec. 11.

¹¹ Report, U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1880, 340. Dr. Ruffner admits that because the mode of raising school taxes was unpopular in "two or three counties . . . there was a disposition . . . on the part of a very few individuals to throw obstacles in the way of their collection"; on the contrary, Dr. Barnas Sears, agent of the Peabody Fund, said, in 1871, "The cities and districts in Virginia which we have assisted to the amount of \$26,000 this year have themselves paid for schools and schoolhouses not far from \$280,000; more than half as much as was paid last year (\$550,000) by all the places receiving aid from us in twelve states."

¹² Constitution of Virginia, Revision of 1902.

It remains to us, then, to summarize the conclusions of the preceding chapters. What were the inheritances from this earlier period which our study aims to reveal? What were the influences for or against the evolution of the free school idea before the Civil War that have profoundly affected subsequent legislation and in such large measure determined popular opinion?

CHAPTER XII

A SUMMARY OF COMMON SCHOOL PROGRESS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR. CONCLUSIONS

THE progressive ideal of the American Free School is, in all the states, the fruit of contest against Old-World conceptions, and a phase of the evolution of democracy. Its success may be associated with the Civil War period and the rapid social-economic changes that followed that war, though all the states laid its foundations in the earlier period. Virginia, therefore, in establishing a centrally organized common school system in 1870 was, in fact, apace with the American states at large and not the backward, benighted state that prejudice and ignorance have sometimes pictured her. The battle for the democratization of education began in the Virginia Assembly in the year of the Declaration of Independence and continued unremittingly till 1870. More accurately, it may be said to have continued into the present time. If the Northern and Western states and even her neighbor, North Carolina, passed somewhat more rapidly through this democratizing process, what, then, may be said to have been the reasons why Virginia did not profit by her initial start?

A popular idea since 1869, even within the state and certainly in many places outside the state, is that the Underwood Convention brought the common free school idea from New England and forced it upon a people antagonistic to any form of popular diffusion of knowledge and dedicated to the principle of differentiation of class through education. But unless ready to assimilate them a people commonly repudiates foreign customs and progressive systems of government. It would have been impossible for any alien or, for that matter, native body to force the people of Virginia to accept an institution distasteful to them. Defects and successes in popular school administration in the state must, therefore,

find their explanation in the social history of the ante-bellum period.

The presence of slavery has been brought forward as a partial explanation of the South's difficulty in moving rapidly toward the free school idea; for it is recognized that as long as legal slavery existed neither the *owned* nor the *owner* could be responsive to democratic institutions. But the class and sectional struggle which went on *within* ante-bellum Virginia and the geographical conditions which determined her effort to keep her house in order and at the same time assimilate democratic ideals has found little place in ordinary discussions of the educational traditions of the state. Much has been written upon the transplanted English institutional life in colonial Virginia; little has been done to evaluate the evolutionary process through which that state passed during the early national period.

It should be borne in mind that, after all, North and South have very much more in common in the struggle for popular free schools than they have differences. All thirteen original states were essentially English in customary thinking and in their love of English institutions, among which the free, common school had not appeared. They were an agricultural people, living under primitive conditions, isolated and tradition-bound in many practices. There were few towns to break the influence of country life.¹ In New England and New York, however, enough industrial interests developed to place the center of aristocratic influence in the city of New York and in the party of Alexander Hamilton. Virginia, on the other hand, became identified through Thomas Jefferson with a theory of democracy which placed its faith in the small farmer class, opposed the rise of an artisan class, and protested against an autocracy of church, state, or industry.²

The state struggled against the same influences which retarded all the original states — acceptance in *theory* of the political ideals of democracy but retention in *practice* of aristocratic notions and institutions, — safeguards of economic

¹ Norfolk, 1860, had but 24,420, Richmond 22,000, Lynchburg 3000, while the aggregate town population was but 175,000.

² Beard, *op. cit.*, 413-66. *Vide* p. 14, *supra*.

interests whether these were slavery in the South or infant industries in the North. Among the rank and file there was a national faith in training for immediate needs and a corresponding reluctance to accept the more remote values of a "literary" education. Exigencies of frontier life postponed the concept of training for citizenship among the self-supporting middle class till the practical demands of their environment had been partially met. Money was too scarce and revolt against taxation had been too large a factor in American Independence to make the idea of public support of an institution, not yet fully appraised, a popular one. To be taxed for the support of one's neighbor's children without one's individual consent was held by many, in all the states along the seaboard, to be an abridgment of the rights of democracy.

In common with the Southern states, Virginia failed to develop agencies to combat certain obstructions to progressive society. It failed to develop a township system of local self-government. Favorable geographical conditions gave rise to slavery. It remained an agricultural section supporting a system of social and economic distinctions based on the classic ideal of "wealth and worth." It perpetuated a scheme of appointive officers; Thomas Jefferson is said to have observed, "Many die in office but few resign." Royal anti-commercial policies, early imposed upon the colony, made it reflect, as Governor Berkeley said, "England out of town." It failed to enter upon the industrial revolution that followed the war for political independence, as did the Northern states, which were developing towns, extensive trade relations, and many industries. While the population of these states was doubling every decade, Eastern Virginia remained stationary or actually decreased in population.

Means of communication were limited, country roads were poor and devious. A penalty imposed by negro labor was the "trial and error" method of farming and the burden of the "one crop" system, which in many sections of the South to-day still menaces its economic life. The coming of the steam railroad, the introduction of improved agricultural implements, scientific methods, commercial fertilizer, and the increased importance of towns and commercial

interests in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, marked the advent of a newer era and were paralleled by progressive and concerted movements for public education. The Southern Commercial Congress of 1850, the rapid growth of Norfolk at that time, the successful prosecution of public internal improvement, and the great impetus given the "Schools for All Classes" during the fifteen years before the Civil War were evidences of this newer period.

Virginia was, therefore, during the early national period, essentially a state of country-folk, feeling little of that quickening which comes with industrial movements, and responding slowly to demands for improved methods and mechanics. Apathy on the part of the masses and a boasted conservatism among the well-to-do find their explanation here. Governor John H. Means, in his annual message to the South Carolina legislature in 1853, spoke in high praise of the Southern people's ability to conserve their sectional interests by avoiding new and radical influences from without:

"Too scattered for combination . . . too separated for extension of licentious doctrines and habits, too intent upon the staid [through] the nature of their pursuits to indulge in unhealthy dreams . . . preserving what is established through a homogeneous interest and occupation."³

The point of this study lies, however, in those reasons, peculiar to Virginia, why the Jeffersonian educational philosophy and the state's persistent effort to build a common school system partially failed. Even from its Southern neighbors, Virginia was marked off by certain peculiar obstacles to successful common school legislation. These have been discussed in some detail in earlier chapters and touched upon throughout this study. In the main these difficulties were a paralyzing sectionalism in politics, a strong slave controversy within the state, and the premature educational legislation of 1818, which came as one of the regrettable results of the Jefferson-Mercer controversy over the school bills of 1815-18, disposing of the Literary Fund income for the maintenance of a state university and a system of scholarships for the education of "poor" children.

A few facts may profitably be reviewed here. Not only did the Old Dominion suffer the blight that must have come

³ *Southern Review*, "Destinies of the South," 1853, XXVII, 199.

to the largest slave-holding state of the South, but its population was early thrown into a number of small self-sustaining units by its river systems and cut in half by a great mountain chain. Mountains are natural national boundary lines; people thus cut off from one another are never like-minded. This geographical factor contributed to a division of interests and habits of life and thought; Virginia was never a political unity except in name. The western counties beyond the mountains naturally developed a nonslave-holding middle class of increasing power and increasing insistence to be heard on the great questions of internal improvement.⁴ The influence of this middle class in the trans-Alleghany region had grown with immigration from eastern Virginia and from the Northern and Western states. This immigration, however, was seriously checked by a lack of market and transportation facilities and by the uncertainty of western land titles which involved new settlers in litigation and frequently drove them to other states. A writer of the time says: "Litigation has depopulated the very western territory which most needed settlers to develop our new, larger, rich regions."⁵ This defective land system in turn naturally affected free school progress. Another writer, making a demand for improved educational facilities, incidentally says:

"We need laws protecting *bona fide* settlers which will encourage people to come in and occupy lands which now no one can claim with assurance even when more is paid for it than in the East. If this is done, there will be many small farms and with them will come the District System and school libraries."⁶

The life of a progressive people depends upon its power to sell its products, to reach a profitable market. The rivers of the eastern slope, it was claimed, gave that section every facility to market its goods. But the Great Barrier shut the small farmers and cattle raisers of the Valley and western slope from these natural waterways. The necessity of the West, therefore, was improved facility for marketing its products. Rapidly developing a majority in population, that section demanded taxation for *internal improvement*. The

⁴ Cf. Ambler, C. H., *op. cit.*, for political significance of this factor.

⁵ Reprint *Norfolk Daily Argus*, *op. cit.*, 1857.

⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, Jan. 17, 1840, a correspondent from Wheeling.

eastern counties, however, long retained the power of withholding such appropriations for public works by controlling representation in the General Assembly. As a contemporary editor phrased it: "Thus the *power* of the state was divided against its *necessity*." Threatened by the national movement for the abolition of slavery, the East neglected its internal affairs for the larger question of national politics. The West, dominated by its need of reaching a market, demanded and finally achieved the equalization of power in the state legislature necessary to accomplish its purpose.

As a result, a new era of internal improvement dawned, and in the decade before the Civil War the state raised by taxation more than twelve million dollars for improving trade facilities. By 1857 these internal improvements are said to have doubled the value of 500,000 slaves (\$237,000,000) and increased real estate holdings more than one hundred million dollars. On the eve of the Civil War, Governor Henry A. Wise, in advocating a \$25,000,000 appropriation for public improvement, showed how this money could be provided by public taxation without serious embarrassment to the people of the state.⁷ Great expenditures for public improvement, however, plunged Virginia heavily in debt and checks were placed upon appropriations to save the credit of the state. The financial panic of 1857 caused consternation. Enthusiasm for taxation waned. Unfortunately, this reaction came at the time when the free school idea was finding a more general acceptance among the people.

The increase in valuation of property indicated above is, of course, an index of the state's wealth as a whole. Less than half of the people owned slaves. The slave-holder, however, was not as a rule the carefree opulent gentleman of leisure or the master of finance that popular fancy paints him. The average Virginian farmer of the early nineteenth century lived well, but ready money was scarce. Even with the large property holder, all the plantation produced went back as a rule to feed himself and his servants. Dependent upon fluctuations in the prices of the great staple crops, the farmer too often looked to next year's harvest for this year's

⁷ Reprint "Wealth, Resources and Hopes of Virginia," *Norfolk Daily Southern Argus*, 13.

purchases.⁸ Borrowing and lending was common and many became seriously involved. The service of the negro slave was an expensive form of labor. Waste in sickness, old age, and childhood was a drain upon profits that modern capital knows little of except, perhaps, through compensation laws.⁹ Adapted for extensive farming,— which made for the cultivation of large areas, and in consequence, the isolation of country life,— he perpetuated poor methods and the single-crop idea. It was comparatively late in the national period when the Norfolk *Argus* could say:

“The increase of population and the comparative activity of trade in the eastern portion of the state has changed the large plantation system of culture into small horticultural and arboricultural farming. The immense fields once scoured by tobacco are bright under a rotation of cereal and garden products or made green again by manures and grazing. Fertilizers are beginning to be used.”¹⁰

Crop failure, or low prices of tobacco, corn, or cotton determined the wealth of the community. In adversity the local school or academy was the first to suffer. Hence came the transient teacher and what was well called the “ambulatory school,” — both flourishing in periods of prosperity and both moving on when money was scarce.¹¹ There is little wonder that the small planter and the large one dreaded the burden of a compulsory tax.

The practical problem, therefore, in inaugurating a state system of common schools, was how to popularize it. The best way would undoubtedly have been to have encouraged the common man to educate his children by making education cheap enough for him to afford, and thus to have led him to understand its values. Virginia, in creating the top and bottom of a system of schools by the Act of 1818, gave no incentive to the great mass of the people of the state to build

⁸ *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, IX, 133. This, of course, is one of the evils of a “one-crop” system and is a present-day menace to rural life.

⁹ In reporting a conversation, in 1774, with Mrs. Robert Carter, Fithian says: “We both concluded that if in Mr. Carter’s or any Gentleman’s estate all the Negroes should be sold and the money put to interest and let the lands which these Negroes now work, lie wholly uncultivated, the bare interest would be greater than what is now received from their working the Lands, making no allowance at all for the trouble and risk of the Masters as to crops and Negroes.” Fithian, *op. cit.*, 145.

¹⁰ Reprint *Norfolk Daily Argus*, *op. cit.*, 1857, 13.

¹¹ *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, “Philodemus,” IX, 136-7.

an efficient system of middle schools. To the small farmer there were no intermediary schools to bridge the chasm between the primary schools and the entrance requirements of the University. If he wished to send his boy to the University, he must apparently resort to the tutorial system to make up the deficiencies of neighborhood private schools. And the expense of tuition in the select schools, usually entailing the additional cost of board, was prohibitive for many freeholders intelligent enough to appreciate the value of education for their children. Though Virginia families were notably large, private schools in early Virginia were, as a contemporary authority tell us, "the most expensive in the country."¹² One magazine writer illuminates the situation, after reading Russell's "Travels in Germany," by observing that in borrowing from Europe the state failed to borrow the European system as a whole. There education in preparatory schools was generally within reach of the man of small income — Scotland's tuition was only six shillings a year — and standards in the universities were high. In Virginia, "preparatory schools are poor and deficient, yet the University has European standards. Where education costs much, people are apt to neglect it."¹³

The Act of 1818 not only gave no incentive to the poor man, but led to a recrudescence of prejudice. Two powerful factors arrayed against later movements for the introduction of cheaper schools were the mistakes in the administration of and the psychological defects in the state's first experiment with "free" schools. The free school idea had difficulty in proving itself. The more flagrant abuses of the Literary Fund schools were not overcome before many lost confidence in the new, and saw greater competence and advantage in the private or "select" schools which tradition sanctioned. As one of the period very frankly put it, "These had secured the confidence of parents interested in the cause of education before the day of common schools." Besides, many, in spite of their devotion to republican principles of government, would not risk their "promising son to a seminary where the children of Tom, Dick, and Harry are brought

¹² *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, "Philodemus," IX, 133.

¹³ *Ibid.*, IX, 196, 207.

together in vulgar and suspicious communion."¹⁴ In *theory* these Virginians were democratic, but in *practice* touching their children they were not. Those who had never patronized private schools were not quick to respond to the new schools. As an enlightened correspondent to the Richmond *Enquirer* observed:

"Literary training does not appeal to working men. Nor does it appeal to men who have toiled many days and by severe economy laid up a little money to enter new lands, to *lose* the *time* of their *children* from domestic labors. . . . These are moral difficulties to be overcome. . . . The uninformed do not see the necessity of educating their children for their own benefit or for the benefit of the state and are, therefore, unwilling to yield any of their scant physical comforts for, to them, the ideal advantage in dangerous luxuries of learning."¹⁵

Charles Fenton Mercer, in the famous legislative struggle of 1815-18, made a futile effort to build a school system under state leadership, hoping afterwards to teach the people how to use it, and finally how to pay for it. This was the spirit of his bill of 1817, many of the actual details of which were, perhaps, borrowed from Jefferson's original proposals; but in his plea for a centralization of state authority he was Jefferson's most active opponent. In 1826 Mercer, in his "Discourse on Popular Education," says that those states successful in common school legislation, notably Connecticut, had led the people to a realizing sense of their responsibility in the matter of taxation, by central state administration and through a policy of rewards and penalties. The Mercer bill of 1817 was lost. The succeeding legislature passed the notable bill of 1818, establishing the University of Virginia and creating the Literary Fund scholarships for "poor" children.

There has been no attempt in this study to rob Jefferson of his great place in the history of education in Virginia, and, for that matter, in the United States. No one else approximated his influence or foresaw so clearly the ultimate character of the American free school. This is common knowledge. But he failed at times to gain his ends by being too strict a constructionist. Unfortunately, Jefferson lived so near in time to the governmental abuses of the Old World, and realized so well the advantages of the Northern town-

¹⁴ *Southern Review*, 1841, 53, *et seq.*

¹⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, Jan. 17, 1840.

ships machinery for the expression of popular will, that he sacrificed a state school system when it seemed to obstruct the inauguration of this machinery. As President of the United States, he had felt the force of the New England township and regretted its absence in Virginia where he feared autocracy would rob the state of the fruits of the Revolution itself. Fearing government, he would curtail evidences of centralized power at every point. To place the machinery of the people's schools in the hands of a state board of education, to centralize the powers of school administration and taxation was, to Jefferson, to inaugurate only a new autocracy. A system of schools would become both a means and an end in his scheme of a democratic state. As the success of both popular government and popular schools would depend upon the practice of local coöperation and community initiative, the state should not rob the community of this opportunity to exercise these powers. The people must be encouraged to initiate their own tax for schools, to build their own schoolhouses, to elect their own administrative officers, to appoint and license their own teachers. The school system would, in fact, hasten the day in Virginia when township or local self-government would be realized.

Successful inauguration of such a system of people's schools would have been in itself a triumph of democracy. But the social history of the state had been against such expectation of the people's leading themselves out of their own blindness. Certainly, contemporary school history is eloquent against it. To expect such power in a people pressed by the elemental demands of frontier life and trained in Virginia's social system was to demand more than is revealed in the social evolution of New York, Connecticut, or Massachusetts in spite of their popular assemblies. Apathy among the masses was, perhaps, the chief deterrent to educational progress, but this was not to be overcome without governmental agencies. George E. Dabney, appealing to the state in 1841 for educational leadership, goes to the root of the difficulty in both the nation at large and Virginia in particular when he eloquently exclaims:

"The true friend of his country and his kind must *run ahead of popular opinion and endeavor to change it* in those regions where ignorance has

created a spirit of opposition to improvement. The *want of knowledge* is the *last want which the ignorant feel*. . . . Would that some man of commanding talents, great experience, and spotless integrity . . . some DeWitt Clinton . . . some Horace Mann . . . would sacrifice private ease, honor, . . . to the *hope* of rousing the dormant energies of his fellow citizens to judicious action on this subject. His would be a Herculean labor . . . prejudice, ignorance and indolence would raise their hydra-heads on every side.”¹⁶

In the clash of argument in which friends of popular education split hairs over the question of local *versus* state control of school government, democracy was summarily defeated by a minority of conservatives who pressed through the Act of 1818. The dream of democracy had overleaped itself. The only class fully conscious of its needs and exercising any degree of real interest in school legislation had obtained what it wanted. The aristocratic element could now send their children to their own university; that element could also employ tutors to fit their sons to enter it. Individualism had been played against a fear of autocracy and the progress of the free school idea was interrupted. Had Mercer’s policy prevailed, an effectual beginning of a state-supervised free school system might have been made. In its failure, Jefferson must be accredited with a large share. Confidence in an extensive system of private select schools among the well-to-do, a contempt for free education among the small freeholders, the exigencies of a stern physical environment, and a feeling that literary training does not help one conquer new land,— all played their part in defeating the rapid growth of common schools.

Finally, in listing the retarding influences in common school development, the questionable character and meager preparation of the elementary school teacher should be mentioned. The average transient teacher of the average early “adventure” school was not a convincing argument for public taxation to the small farmer who needed his children’s help on the farm and who thought in terms of an education that would guarantee for himself and family the tangible needs of life. On the other hand, the tutorial system naturally affected the status of the teachers of the lower schools. The tutor was well paid and carefully selected.

¹⁶ *Southern Literary Messenger*, 1841, VII, 631-7.

As Fithian said, in 1774, the family teacher just out of college was generally appreciated, though he were a youth, a foreigner, and had neither wealth nor Virginia family connections.¹⁷ In English tradition this contrast between the tutor and the town or "adventure" teacher was early felt. Not only was this traditional attitude perpetuated but no native teaching class replaced that of the colonial era. An element of prejudice was added. The "Old Field School," for the most part, was taught by imported teachers, many of whom, according to a persistent tradition, were transients and wilfully or unwittingly antagonized the rural population. Their formalism in manner and dress, an emphasis on discipline, and a "sense of duty," strange to Virginia customs, brought open hostility to the unsuspecting neighborhood teacher where he did not look for it. After the spread of anti-slavery propaganda, the suspicion of neighborhoods was not infrequently directed against these transients. There is little doubt that the state's inability to encourage larger numbers of natives to remain permanently in the profession had much to do with the failure of many counties to tax themselves for common schools.

What, then, may be said to have been Virginia's part in the evolution of national progressive ideals in education? What were the social inheritances from the ante-bellum period which determined the future policy of the state and laid the foundations of its school system, dedicated to the free school idea?

Thomas Jefferson furnished a fundamental philosophy of education and the constituent elements of the plan for free schools for all classes, and Charles Fenton Mercer forecast the state's highly centralized organization which has been necessary to accomplish this philosophy. The earliest proposal for democratic free schools considered by any American constitutional convention was Jefferson's Bill for the more General Diffusion of Knowledge, 1779. In adopting the permissive statute of 1796, a part of this earlier plan, Virginia was a pioneer in elementary school legislation, even though that law remained a dead letter. In 1802 the colonial

¹⁷ Fithian, *op. cit.*, 287.

Church glebe lands were seized by the state, and under a reorganization of the poor laws became available for free school purposes. A number of the counties sold their glebe lands and, uniting local legacies with the funds from these sales, established poor school systems. In 1810, a small state endowment fund — *The Literary Fund of Virginia* — was created and dedicated to primary education. In 1815, on motion of Charles Fenton Mercer, the Literary Fund was augmented by refunds from the Federal government of loans made by Virginia to help prosecute the War of 1812. This million-dollar foundation precipitated the historic struggle of 1815-18 which ended in appropriating \$45,000 of the Literary Fund income for free scholarships for the poor in the private schools and \$15,000 toward the establishment of a state university. Liberal appropriations were subsequently made to complete the University, but no further help was extended primary schools. In eight years nearly \$1,000,000 was spent in building a magnificent top and an insecure bottom of a public school system.

The needs of the middle class and intermediate schools were left out of the state's bounty, but in succeeding years the tax-payers were given opportunity to accept a great variety of district free school plans, beginning with the Act of 1829, and ending with the Acts of 1846. Virginia, however, has never accepted a district system comparable in details to the township schools of the Northern states. The Act of 1829 presupposed a sufficient density of population to support central schools, but only the modern policy of consolidation of schools, backed by vigorous state leadership, liberal state subsidy, and a trained superintendent has accomplished the work projected by this legislation. The District System of the Northern states failed, therefore, wherever attempted, because it left too much to the initiative of country people widely separated and unused to coöperation and collective expression, and because after all, as Mr. Burwell, of Bedford County, said in the legislature of 1841, it was "a transcript from some other system," with little reference to traditions and geographical conditions in Virginia.

The foundations of a common school system were rather laid in the success of the charity schools, of the Sunday

school movement, and in the evolution of Poor Laws through the schools subsidized under the Act of 1818. What Virginia evolved before the Civil War came through the growth and popularization of the quasi-system of state subsidies created under that act.

To launch the primary school system, stigmatized as it was by pauperism, was no mean task. Yet in spite of inadequate machinery to inaugurate it, class prejudice, and sectional feeling, the system grew rapidly, and in many counties it became merged in the county common school systems which sprang up just prior to the Civil War. It will be interesting to glance through a statistical proof of this expansion:¹⁸

Year	Free White Population	Number of Counties drawing quota	Number of Poor Children in School	Average Cost to State per Child per Annum
1822 (a)	621,000	48	3,298	\$7.03 (b)
1823		90	8,531	5.12
1824		98	10,226	4.81
1825	648,000	99	9,779	4.90
1826		97	11,007	4.48
1827		102	12,642	4.34
1828		102	11,799	3.33
1829		101 (c)	14,109	2.82
1830	694,000	95 (c)	6,000	2.45
1831		98	16,100	2.45
1832		100	17,081	2.52
1833		103	18,006	2.45
1834		103	18,921	2.41
1835	712,920	104	19,965	2.36
1840	740,859	117	47,320	1.51
1850	804,800	129	50,000	
1860	1,047,411	all	85,455	

In the towns the annual Literary Fund quota went largely to the existing orphan, Lancasterian, charity and Sunday schools. At first the county poorhouses frequently conducted such schools under the auspices of the state. These were, of course, scorned generally as "poor" schools. But in the country districts the classic but nondescript and unstable institution known as the "Old Field School" was given great impetus. Itinerant teachers, with the assurance

¹⁸ 1822 to 1835 based on Second Auditor's Report of 1830; 1840, 1850, 1860, United States Census: (a) 1822 reported only partially. Cf. Governor Pleasant's message, 1823, which reports 105; (b) decrease of cost due to local supplement and increased attendance; (c) decrease due to Act of 1829; no reports from counties adopting new district system.

of aid from the commissioners, were encouraged to set up schools in neighborhoods that had never before afforded a school and in which even well-to-do children had not been in sufficient numbers to encourage the establishment of a primary school. These schools, established frequently in discarded buildings and in roughly and carelessly constructed ones, helped spread the gospel of education among people otherwise indifferent to "literary" training or ignorant of the way to coöperate in bringing teachers to their communities. The rural communities needed just the stimulus that the best of these itinerant teachers supplied—the idea that schools were possible to communities that had never supported one.

From 1818 on, Virginia was actually supporting at great expense two systems of education—an extensive private, "select," or fee school scheme and a *free* school system evolving out of it. It is, therefore, necessary to glance, in passing, at the growth of the private schools; for in the figures just cited from Auditor Brown's reports only the number of pupils whose tuition was paid by the state is listed. As the poor children were seldom in the majority, except in the charity schools of the towns and the Sunday schools, the 16,000 poor children listed in 1830 represented only a part of the entire school population in quasi-state schools for that year. The number of pupils in private grammar schools and the academies must have been large. The *American Annals of Education* reports for 1830 one hundred and ten grammar schools conducted by private teachers, who supported themselves by a small tuition fee¹⁹ (usually a dollar a month), fifty-five privately maintained or endowed academies, and twenty or more female seminaries that had sprung up since the Revolution.²⁰ It will be recalled that,

¹⁹ *The Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, IX, 133-4, average cost of tuition in lower schools \$10, in the higher schools \$50-60 a year. Owing to sparsely settled country, children frequently boarded near these schools, adding naturally to these estimates and consequently cutting down the number of schools through lack of support. In many cases a parent must either board out his children, employ a tutor, or because of small enrollment, pay the price of several tuitions for one pupil in order to keep the teacher from deserting his post. Dr. J. H. Rice estimated, in 1818, that Virginia was expending more than one quarter of a million dollars on education outside the state.

²⁰ *American Annals of Education*, 1833, III, 67, 68. Cf. *London Quarterly Journal of Education*, July, 1832, article by a late professor of the University of Virginia. Reprinted in *American Education Society Register*, 1833, V, 321.

in 1821, friends of the academies and colleges blocked an extension of the charity scholarships in the primary schools by forcing through a law providing that whenever the revenue of the Literary Fund exceeded \$60,000 by as much as \$20,000, the academies should be allowed to share in the excess.²¹ In 1835, the first year after receiving their share of such subsidy, there were 387 academies, with an enrollment of 11,088 pupils, although only a few actually received state money or reported their condition to the Second Auditor.

In 1844 Second Auditor Brown reported 3677 schools, primary and secondary, which participated in the Literary Fund in one hundred and twenty-two counties of the state. The state paid for the education of approximately 60,000 children. A large number not included in this estimate were taken care of by private schools in those counties whose quotas were not large enough to go round; for in many sections it was customary in such a case to accept children who were anxious to go to school but unable to pay a tuition fee.

The glory of the state was in her great university and her colleges. In 1840, according to a boast appearing in the *Southern Literary Messenger* of that year, only four states surpassed Virginia in the number of colleges, i.e., seven with a total of over one thousand students! It will be recalled that from the beginning the Literary Fund had been the bone of contention in the triangular fight of primary school, academy, and university parties, each, at times, fighting more or less independently and selfishly for participation in the fund; that the "solemn protest" of the creators of the fund against any future legislature's applying it to any other purpose than that of "the Education of the Poor" had been early disregarded. In addition to the apportionment to the University in 1818, and to the academies in 1821, the colleges of William and Mary, Washington, Hampden-Sidney, Randolph-Macon, then at Boydton, Emory and Henry and Richmond eventually received a share of the Literary Fund through loans. In 1838 the deaf, dumb, and blind children were given a share for an institution at Staunton.²² In 1842

²¹ *House Journal*, 1821, 15; *Acts of Assembly*, 1836, 7; 1838, 33.

²² *Acts of Assembly*, 1838, 31.

a small annual appropriation was allowed the Virginia Military Institute to encourage the training of public school teachers.²³ In 1844 the Medical College at Richmond was subsidized; the same year a subsidy was granted a medical college in the Valley of Virginia;²⁴ in 1836 the Western Lunatic Asylum received a share. There were many other claimants to the fund. All of the colleges receiving state aid were brought under the supervision of the state.

Fortunately the Literary Fund had grown in spite of a state treasurer's defalcation²⁵ in 1820, loose bookkeeping, inefficient methods of collecting fines, etc., and confusion in the settlement of claims for arrearages. Money from the sale of United States lands, old Revolutionary claims upon the Federal government, new fines for unlawful gaming, etc., and several private bequests, notably that of Martin Dawson, had, since the Act of 1818, helped swell the original fund by 1860 to \$1,877,364.68.²⁶ In 1851 the state imposed a capitation tax for primary schools — the first constitutional recognition of the cause of public education.²⁷ By 1856 this tax added \$60,000 to the Literary Fund, and doubled the revenue for elementary schools, the total income rising in 1861 to \$316,663.76.²⁸

In 1846 a system of county superintendents was instituted as one of the results of the conventions of 1841-5. These superintendents were selected by and were to act with a county board of school commissioners. The work of Second Auditor Brown during more than ten years before their creation, in endeavoring to educate his school commissioners to the necessity of visiting schools, of examining teachers and in assisting them in the selection of proper texts, school sites, etc., had prepared the public mind somewhat for the acceptance of these officers. By 1846 Virginia may be said to have had the nucleus of its future organization — a sub-

²³ *Ibid.*, 1841-2, 21; 1847, 18. *Vide* pp. 81, 82, *passim*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1843-4, 29; 1846-7, Mar. 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1821, 14; *Richmond Enquirer*, Jan. 1, 1822; Jan. 26, 1826.

²⁶ *Vide* pp. 45, 158, *supra*.

²⁷ "A capitation tax equal to the tax assessed on land to the value of \$200 shall be levied on every male inhabitant who has attained the age of twenty-two; and one equal moiety of the capitation tax upon white persons shall be applied to the purposes of education in primary and free schools. . . ." *Acts of Assembly*, 1851, 331.

²⁸ *Vide* p. 166, *supra*.

stantial endowment fund dedicated from the beginning to public education, a system of county superintendents, a quasi-superintendent of public instruction in the superintendent of the Literary Fund, a volunteer Central Committee of Education, and a State Educational Association with local branches.

Although the Code of 1849 did not succeed in forcing *all* counties to accept the provision of *one* of the *common* school statutes, Virginia did place itself abreast of its sister states (*vide* p. 163 *supra*) in the adoption by many counties of the "District Free Schools for the Education of All Classes." These school systems established in Norfolk, Elizabeth City, Princess Anne, Northampton, King George, Albemarle, Accomac, Washington, Ohio, Kanawha, and Jefferson Counties and the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Fredricksburg, and Wheeling were typical of the best American educational development of the time and may be said to have marked the culmination of ante-bellum progress in public education in Virginia. As was shown in a preceding chapter, these counties were not confined to any particular section but were widely scattered, although the majority centered around the city of Norfolk,—the oldest section of the conservative East but the section most responsive to trade and commercial expansion.

This distribution of counties experimenting with common schools was, as Mr. Brown had said of the experiment of 1829, "as yeast leavening the whole." Future progress in education was to achieve for the whole state what these counties evolved for themselves. Even if the principle of "voluntary contributions" had not been generally replaced by public taxation at the time of the Civil War, the foundations of a new, nonsectarian, publicly supported, and state-controlled public free school system had been laid for both eastern and western Virginia. What remained to be done was to make democratization complete by centralized power at Richmond and by the removal of the long-recognized obstacle to a state system—the "pauper" scholarships of the primary schools; to create a native, efficient teaching class in whom the people could repose confidence; to insure the permanency and professional efficiency of this class through state examination

and certification, normal schools, county training classes and institutes; to provide effective, intelligent state leadership in obtaining local coöperation in the consolidation of schools, to improve the physical condition of schoolhouses and grounds; and finally to remove that "apathy bred of isolation" by convincing country people that popular education is neither a public charity nor a mere civic right but a common obligation upon all for the protection and development of the commonwealth itself.

Finally, it may be said that the free school idea grew with the commercial life of the state. As long as Virginia's ideal of worth was measured by land, there must needs have been a scattered population, great disparity of wealth, and a system of private schools.²⁹ Common schools could come only as "the scourge of the tobacco fields" was lifted to give way to small farms and to the commercial spirit. This movement was felt in the decade before the Civil War. In eleven counties and four cities, comprising about one sixth of the population of the state, there was in successful operation a genuine system of common, free schools, "The Schools for the Education of All Classes."³⁰ Many other corporations were actually supporting common free schools but did not report to the Second Auditor under this title. In the last few years of this period there was a rapid movement among the counties to replace the older Literary Fund schools with this new system. The city of Parkersburg and the county of Wood, now part of West Virginia, voted to accept free schools so late in 1859 that war was upon them before the idea could be extended. In fact, Virginia was on the eve of accepting the free school idea in its fullness. However, just when the state was entering upon a new era of school development, when small farms, better farm methods, and the use of fertilizers were changing the character of the state,

²⁹ To speak of a *system* of *private* schools is, of course, a contradiction in terms.

³⁰ The counties and cities actually accepting the principle and provisions for "The District Free Schools for the Education of All Classes" had in 1860 a total white adult population of 160,000. The foreigners born in the eastern counties ranged from two in King George to 439 in Elizabeth City; in the trans-Alleghany counties from 708 in Wood to more than 5000 in Ohio. The aggregate foreign-born population of the state was 35,000 as compared to 1,000,000 in New York state.

the whole course of social evolution was diverted by preparation for war.

Yet even in this decade of war preparation, great progress was made in elementary education. In addition to the "Schools for All Classes" in the counties and cities enumerated, there was a quasi-state free school system of some merit in every county of the state, with its own superintendent and commissioners reporting annually to the State Superintendent of the Literary Fund. In 1845, before the advent of the county superintendents, forty-five counties reported that "the majority of their schools" were in operation "for nine months and upwards," while only eighteen reported sessions as short as "three to six months." The counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Fayette, Grayson, Harrison, Lee, Madison, Marion, Montgomery, Page, Russell, Shenandoah, Smith, Tyler, and Warren, all in the sparsely settled sections of mountain regions, reported schools for "different periods not specified."³¹

According to the United States census of 1860,³² 154,963 children of a white population of 1,047,411 were in public and private schools within the state. 3896 public school teachers and 3778 public school buildings are accredited to Virginia; while for Massachusetts, with a population of 1,231,068, only 5308 teachers and 4134 buildings are reported. Virginia reported 86,452 and Massachusetts 46,921 adults who could not read or write. New York State, with a population of 3,880,735 is accredited with 121,878 illiterates, 164,782 paupers, and more than 50,000 convicted criminals. Massachusetts reports 51,880 paupers and 12,732 convicts; Virginia, with a population four fifths as large, supported only 6027 public paupers and convicted only 608 people of crime during the year previous to the census. These statistics are brought forward to indicate a relatively healthier state of affairs than is frequently supposed. There is no desire to claim more for the state than the facts allow; it is true that Virginia still retained the public declaration of poverty as a prerequisite to free tuition in her public

³¹ *House Journal*, 1845-6, Document No. 4, 43, for statistics on length of school term, uniformity of texts, etc.

³² U. S. Census, 1860, Population, 506,512. *vide* p. 190 ff. *supra*.

schools except in the "Schools for All Classes," but so, until 1867, did New York State.

All that can be said in conclusion is that the Old Dominion sustained itself through the travail of a marvelous struggle to accept a new political ideal without rending the state and sacrificing its property and peculiar interests. The removal of slavery was the final step in passing from colony to commonwealth. With the freedom of the negro the state itself became free. If Virginia accomplished less than several of the other states in the days before the War, it had greater obstacles to overcome and required more time for the fruition of those principles of the Rights of Man which found such ready advocates in the many Virginians of the Revolution.

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